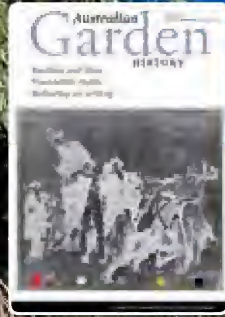
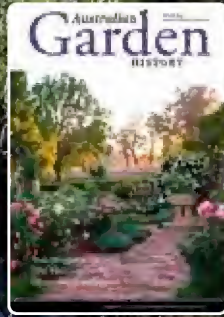
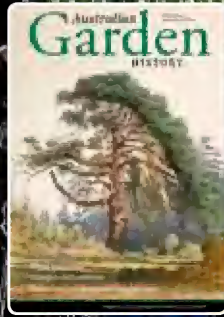
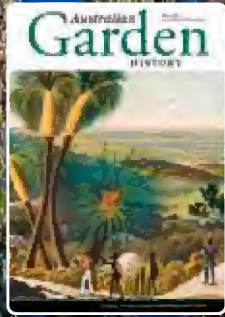
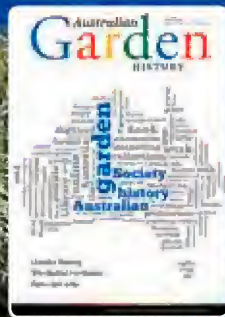
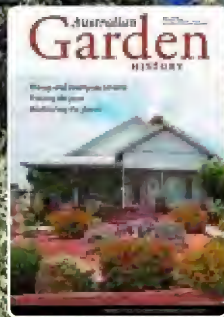
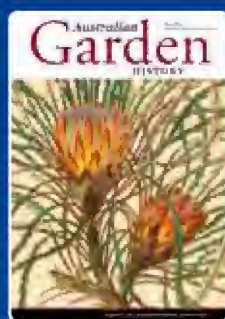
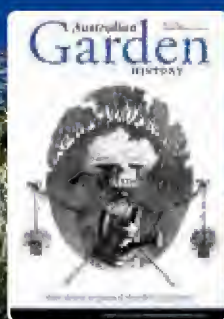


# Australian Garden HISTORY

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Cover: As this issue demonstrates, the future of Australian garden history is alive with promise. Background image depicts *Acacia pendula* (Weeping Myall) at Adelaide's Waite Arboretum.

'The Wannon Falls and Beyond' is the first comprehensive exhibition showcasing one of Australia's great colonial artists, Thomas Clark. His body of work reveals a natural talent for skilfully depicting the early pastoral landscape of the picturesque Western District of Victoria. This will be the first major survey of the artist's accomplished, yet mysterious, career and brings together his most significant works from some of the major collections and private holdings in the country. Hamilton Art Gallery, 21 September to 17 November 2013, free entry.

Thomas Clark (1814–1883), 'Koonongwootong landscape' (oil on canvas), c.1865, Private Collection

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# Reviewing the cultural history of gardens

Christina Dyson &  
Richard Aitken

For those with sharp eyes or long memories it will be noted that this is the twenty-fifth volume of *Australian Garden History*,

quarterly journal of the Australian Garden History Society. We feel a jubilee is worth celebrating and this issue includes a diverse range of treats.

Firstly we welcome sponsorship from The University of Melbourne (through the Ellis Stones Memorial Fund), awarded to assist the journal and its editors to foster scholarship and interest amongst a rising generation of garden historians through accessible and innovative means. This will include an investigation into the possibility of delivering this journal on a digital platform (to augment rather than dispense with our current format)—the landscape is changing rapidly, and if we wish to avoid extinction we need to adapt.

In her jubilee contribution Roslyn Burge charts our first twenty-five volumes, in the process celebrating the journal's achievements and drawing attention to strengths that can be built upon. Elsewhere we have invited a wide spectrum of contributors to engage us with their own interests in garden history and to speculate on some future directions that may keep our field both distinctive and sustainable. And in this editorial we review the new six-volume *A Cultural History of Gardens*, to be published this year. Works of this stature and interest appear at rare intervals and this indeed is an eagerly anticipated moment and an achievement to savour.

*A Cultural History of Gardens*, under the general editorship of Michael Leslie and John Dixon Hunt, comprises six volumes representing chronological slices covering antiquity, medieval times, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, an age of Empire, and of modernity, weighted to suit garden making over this expansive terrain. No date span is given in the title of each work, but we can deduce the two volumes of most interest to Australian readers, volume 5 ('The Age of Enlightenment') covers 1800–1920, and volume 6 ('The Modern Age') the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The most novel feature of this set—one that sets it apart from almost all other world garden histories—is the common chapter structure across all volumes of design, types of gardens, plantings, use and reception, meaning, verbal representations, visual representations, and gardens and the larger landscape.

Reading the set requires a few leaps of faith, and these are ignored at the reader's peril. Firstly the book is not an encyclopedia and so makes no claims to comprehensiveness. Secondly, there are geographical restrictions—China and Japan are for instance specifically excluded (though invoked on occasion where they form a significant influence)—and coverage is strongly tilted towards Britain, Europe, and the United States. To increase the spread (and the reader's workload), the editors suggest that we take examples from our own knowledge to supplement those given. Images are well chosen, but hardly the dominant feature of the work.

Given that there is very little specifically Australian content in the relevant volumes, rather than loose sleep over perceived omissions, the texts are best read as the editors suggest. And if this wider appreciation is invoked, both volumes 5 and 6 are very rich indeed. By page 4 of volume 5 we have already read about the

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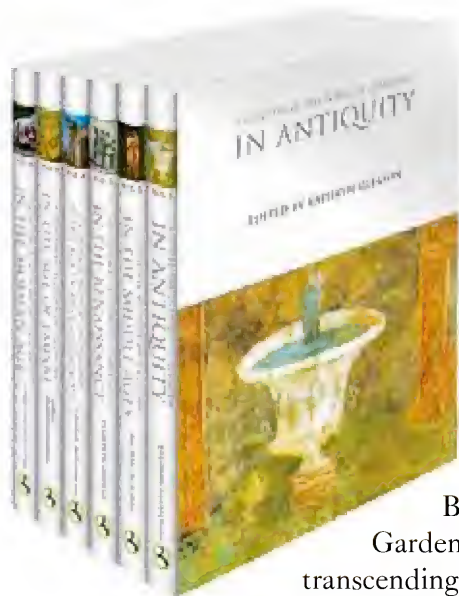
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#### Some precursors to *A Cultural History of Gardens*

J.C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening ... including ... a general history of gardening in all countries*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, London, 1822 (and later eds).

Marie Luise Gothein, *A History of Garden Art*, (1st German ed., 1914), J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London and Toronto, 1928.

Eleanor Sinclair Rohde, *The Story of the Garden*, The Media Society, London, 1932.

Richardson Wright, *The Story of Gardening: from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the hanging gardens of New York*, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1934.

Nan Fairbrother, *Men and Gardens*, Hogarth Press, London, 1956.

Derek Clifford, *A History of Garden Design*, Faber and Faber, London, 1962.

Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: the development of landscape architecture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1971.

Geoffrey Jellicoe & Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man: shaping the environment from prehistory to the present day*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975.

Anthony Huxley, *An Illustrated History of Gardening*, Paddington Press Ltd in association with the Royal Horticultural Society, New York & London, 1978.

Ronald King, *The Quest for Paradise: a history of the world's gardens*, Whitte Books Ltd, Weybridge, Surrey, 1979.

Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, Croom Helm, London, 1979.

John Oldham & Ray Oldham, *Gardens in Time*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1980.

William Howard Adams, *Nature Perfected: gardens through history*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1991.

Penelope Hobhouse, *The Story of Gardening*, Dorling Kindersley Limited London, 2002.

Tom Turner, *Garden History: philosophy and design 2000 BC–2000 AD*, Spon Press/Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, 2005.

late-eighteenth-century Napoleonic garden in central Europe, wherein ancient monuments were integrated and their richness yoked to Enlightenment thought, and using our own local knowledge we see in this a precedent, for instance, in the classically styled Museum of Economic

Botany in Adelaide Botanic

Garden augmenting and even transcending its more utilitarian role in promoting colonial commerce.

What of Australian content? Luke Morgan from Monash University is the only Australian contributor, on his speciality, the Renaissance garden. Experienced historians and authors such as Anne Neale and George Seddon are quoted or cited, places such as the Adelaide Park Lands and Melbourne Botanic Gardens enjoy discussion as case study status (although *The Garden of Australian Dreams* is inconclusively located, variously in Adelaide and its more customary Canberra); and a single image (pukamani poles on Bathurst Island) illustrates Australian vernacular place making. In volume 5 Australia supplies plants to Kew, is a site of colonial botanic gardens (as part of the British Empire), its botanic gardens and park lands combine science and pleasure, and Bateman is influenced by Thouin. In volume 6 the long tradition of civic values being influenced through the conscious formation of a civic aesthetic in public gardens is recognised as extending beyond Europe to North America, Australia, India, and Asia. Canberra as a designed city is briefly mentioned alongside other national capitals (Chandigarh and Brasilia) as an example of large-scale civic gardens, although the Griffins do not rate a mention. Plants and seeds from Australia are noted as forming part of a wide network of exchange and trial from comparable 'Mediterranean' climates.

Sonja Dümpelmann recounts the advice of late-nineteenth-century formalist J.D. Sedding, to relegate the wild garden to the colonies and allow 'an old land like ours [i.e. England]' to have gardens that curtsy to old-fashioned country houses, with formal lines, terraces, and geometrically patterned beds. Should we feel

relegated? And if so, what are some of the lessons from this cultural history that we can take to advance the cause of Australian garden history?

We lack a Mark Laird, who marries detailed historical understanding of our garden plants with an empirical knowledge of their use. We certainly lack a John Dixon Hunt, an outstanding scholar with wide interests, a firm institutional base, and one whose whole energy is focussed on the promotion of garden history. Without a substantial scholarly focus, garden history in Australia can never consider itself to be truly rounded, however numerous and grounded its enthusiasts may be. And although not explicitly canvassed by the editors and their collaborators, for Australian garden historians at least, environmental history is the elephant in the room. It is the rising discipline. It is wide-ranging, inclusive, pragmatic, forward looking; by contrast garden history can seem narrowly focused, elitist, romantic, rooted in the past.

The lessons from reading *A Cultural History of Gardens* suggest that we need to redouble our efforts to ensure Australian garden history plays a greater part in international discourse. An emphasis on parochial concerns and an inward focus do us a great disservice. Australian garden history is rich in content and context, and we must strive to make our significant places visible and our voices heard. Much has and is being done, but more is necessary. We live in a global environment. Our concerns must reflect this.

#### Books reviewed

Michael Leslie & John Dixon Hunt (general editors), *A Cultural History of Gardens*, 6 vols, Bloomsbury, London, 2013 (ISBN 9781847882653): RRP \$700 (set)

Sonja Dümpelmann (ed.), *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Age of Empire*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013 (ISBN 9780857850331): hardback, 278pp

John Dixon Hunt (ed.), *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Modern Age*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013 (ISBN 9780857850348): hardback, 272pp

#### Recommended reading

Edward Harwood, Tom Williamson, Michael Leslie, & John Dixon Hunt, 'Whither garden history?', *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 27 (2) 2007, pp.91–112.

James John Beattie & Katie Holmes, 'Reflections on the history of Australasian gardens and landscapes', *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 31 (2), 2011, pp.75–82.





Andrea Gaynor

## *The landscape of Australian garden history*

The various approaches to Australian garden history are increasingly extending beyond a traditional antiquarian viewpoint to embrace the disciplines of urban, cultural, and environmental history.

Let's imagine for a moment that we can visualise historical scholarship in the form of its subject matter. Urban history is represented by a scattering of cities—mostly large, American or European—populated with sharply discernable characters: men, women, workers, protesters, lots of planners, a few children, and a small but increasing number of animals. A few gardens are scattered here and there, while factories, homes, and other workplaces appear in abundance. Processes of development, destruction, and renewal are visible, contained by permeable barriers of regulation and economy. In some cases, we can see the diverse networks connecting cities with increasingly global hinterlands.

Environmental histories fill in some of the blank spaces in our cities: freeways, water supplies, rivers, rubbish dumps, and a few more gardens. Together with rural histories they also populate our historiographical landscape with farms and forests: sites of conflict, struggle, failure, and, increasingly, resilience. There is not much open ocean in our historiographical world, but the length of coast is growing yearly, and populated with an increasing number of fishers (many exploiters and some stewards) and, in sharp contrast to the real world, an increasing number of marine animals. Droughts, floods, cyclones, fire, and other natural forces ravage the land with increasing frequency.

What kind of landscape would the scholarship on Australian garden history create? There would be a good number of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century gardens, in which colonists create first vegetable then ornamental gardens, always staring anxiously over the fence around the garden trying to spot the Aborigines in the

Andrea Gaynor in a Mount Lawley vegetable garden.

forbidding bush beyond. In later nineteenth and early twentieth century gardens we see a range of technologies in use, and various garden elements—seeds, conifers, fountains, follies—emerging from and transported by key elements of their context: fashion, policy, empire, war. Scattered here and there, though not in great profusion, are market gardens, school gardens, plant nurseries, community gardens, cemeteries. There are some garden cities, though it is often hard to make out what is in their gardens. ‘Cottage’ gardens appear in charming abundance while backyards are often hidden. There are many people (mostly adult, white, and elite or middle class) thinking about gardens, painting them, photographing them. Associations, on the other hand, are few and their operations often opaque. Social networks and structures, intellectual and aesthetic currents, and personal experiences drive the activities of numerous prominent garden designers and patrons, who go busily about their work. These men and women produce the stately gardens and parks that remain prominent, within an increasingly diversified terrain, from any garden history vantage point. The weather here is mostly sunny with the chance of a shower. The climate is temperate or Mediterranean; rarely tropical or arid.

When we venture into the gardens, especially domestic gardens, we find that some are tended by gardeners (whose lives are shaped by identifiable social and cultural processes). Some gardens seem self-maintaining, but there are often more people making gardens than experiencing them. These people think a lot about plant choice and placement, less often about the quotidian: watering, pest control, manure. Many are women; most are white and speak English as a first language. Children are rarely seen and, true to the ideal, less often heard. Plants themselves play little or no part in the shaping of the garden beyond their tractable growth. Gardens tend to grow in a pleasingly compliant way, though struggles sometimes emerge as they proceed into cantankerous old age. Regardless of place or time, gardens seem to somehow function without the involvement of non-humans: birds, invertebrates, bacteria. No caterpillars march determinedly from Cape lilacs into living rooms; trees never fall on houses.

Of course much of what we find in the landscape depends on the tools and strategies used to investigate it. Garden historians who spend considerable time in actual gardens become more attuned to thinking about the diverse spaces,

elements, and processes that make up gardens than those whose knowledge is more theoretical. Likewise, those who spend time becoming familiar with the primary sources are able to paint a clearer picture than those whose knowledge is gleaned second-hand.

As well as reaffirming the need for quality research, this survey—though representing only one perspective—perhaps highlights at least two potential opportunities for garden history in Australia.

Firstly the field as it stands, with its focus on human agency, neglects the realities of our engagement with a dynamic non-human world (or at least does not frame them as such) in garden settings. More broadly, garden history might to a greater extent embrace its potential to provide insight into critical questions about relationships between people and ‘nature’, interrogated with due attention to how these are shaped both by power relations within society, and autonomous organisms and forces. In an age of increasing, if normalised, environmental crisis, this is an important and pressing issue on which garden history can shed valuable light.

Secondly, the field retains a discernable antiquarian streak and a tendency to marginalise the activities and experiences of children and minorities, as well as the people and landscapes of the centre and north of the Australian continent. Although this has become less the case over recent years, in my view the field could be usefully be invested with still greater diversity.

Should environmental, urban, social, and cultural historians fill in these parts of the historiographical terrain, and leave garden historians to do what they have always done? To some extent they are starting to, though gardens continue to occupy a peripheral position in those fields, and their practitioners often bring to their research perspectives and knowledge bases that are different to those of garden historians. Research agendas that intersect and overlap are likely to produce hybrid approaches and productive synergies, to the advantage of all.

---

**Andrea Gaynor** is Professor of History at The University of Western Australia. An environmental historian, she pursues various questions relating to historical relationships between the human and non-human. Her publications include *Harvest of the Suburbs: an environmental history of growing food in Australian cities* (UWA Press, 2006) and articles on topics as diverse as landscape art and feral cats.





Dominic Cole

## *At the coalface: garden history, heritage conservation, and interpretation*

The Garden History Society, established in Britain in 1966, is currently consolidating fruitful links with kindred organisations, providing a useful model for co-operative partnerships.

From where I sit, as Chairman of the Garden History Society and a long-time enthusiast for the conservation of gardens and landscapes, I feel that our shared interests are on the cusp of change. But firstly, as GHS Chairman, I am the lucky one who gets to see our complementary copy of *Australian Garden History* and the Australian Garden History Society should be congratulated for its journal, which I really look forward to reading, even though I have not visited Australia and most of the place names are alien to me. (My two favourite editions—for their covers alone—are the

ones showing the rotating clothes driers and the tyre swan. The latter is in the queue for framing and if anyone would like to send me the real thing I would be a happy recipient.)

Before musing on the state of garden history I should explain that I am not a historian but am very passionate about historic gardens and fascinated by the mechanics of a small voluntary organisation such as the GHS—and by extension, sister organisations such as the AGHS—and how we can harness the energies, enthusiasms, and knowledge of our members to make sure that historic gardens get the best possible deal. I believe that it is a huge waste of energy for small organisations to be political internally and hope that the GHS concentrates on the issues at hand rather than individual egos. Now that there is so much information available on the internet

London-based consultant landscape architect and Garden History Society Chairman Dominic Cole ponders the future.

DCLA Dominic Cole  
Landscape Architects

it seems less relevant to be over-protective of individual academic study and I am proud that our internationally recognised journal *Garden History* is now available in digital format on JSTOR after two years from publication.

This is not to deny that there continue to be revelatory and beautiful publications on garden history. I have to cite, in particular *The Garden of Ideas* (2010), which is meticulously researched, but accessible and one of the most spectacularly illustrated books on garden history I have seen. If I had to pick my favourite illustration it would be Adelaide's Prospect House in the late 1840s (pp.96–97), for opening my eyes to the absurdity of creating a picky British Regency pattern of beds in the middle of a desert! My former student Caroline Grant also sent a copy of *Cape Arid* (2012) illustrated by Phillipa and Alex Nikulinsky; what a stunning work—much greater than Marianne North and making me want to give up trying to draw anything!

## *But what of the state of garden history in the United Kingdom?*

But what of the state of garden history in the United Kingdom? Because of the political separation of Wales and Northern Ireland, active involvement of the GHS in conservation concentrates on England and Scotland. The national body, English Heritage, makes grant aid available to the GHS and several other 'amenity societies' to deal with responses to planning casework—applications for development and change that may affect historic parks and gardens. English Heritage does not have the resources in house to make such responses and is following a central government agenda to work 'locally', with local people and, especially, volunteers.

The GHS works with fellow umbrella body, the Association of Gardens Trusts (that represents some 35 county groups throughout England) to encourage and provide training for the local groups. The grant aid does not cover the full cost of employing qualified professionals to respond to planning casework—the remainder of the funds are found through membership subscriptions and activities—and with a dropping membership due largely to austerity and ageing the GHS has to be ever more careful with the housekeeping. Our public face needs to respond to new ways of communicating so that we appeal to a younger audience.

Aside from the role of the GHS to keep an eye out for the protection and conservation of

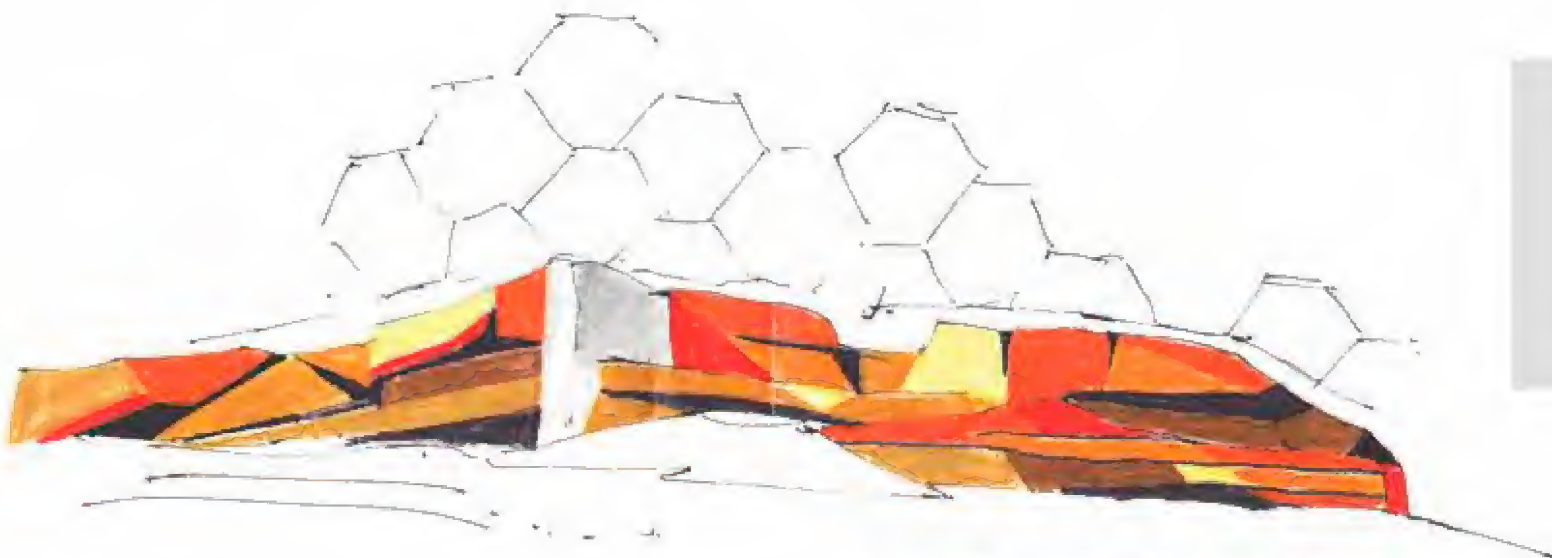
gardens it is encouraging to consider the huge input of funding for parks and gardens that has been generated by the National Lottery (via the Heritage Lottery Fund). Local authorities and charitable organisations may apply for funds to plan conservation and refurbishment, usually requiring professional input. Tens of millions of pounds has been spent on parks and gardens since the Lottery started. The programme is intended to increase involvement by local people and has seen the evolution of friends groups, community hubs, and a generally raised awareness that there is such a thing as a historic park.

The National Trust talks about conservation as 'managing the process of change' (such as decay, new car parks, wear and tear) and that it needs to happen in a way that is sensitive to the property. As a volunteer on its Parks and Gardens Advisory Panel it is surprising how often we need to gently point out the extraordinary qualities of the gardens which Trust staff manage. There is always a push, especially among younger staff, to imprint their own ideas and to break out in to new ground, usually meaning less time to garden the garden that is significant! Overall though the National Trust has 'modernised' dramatically and continues to seek ways of appealing to a wider and more diverse membership. The organisation is currently trialing partnerships working in the inner city parts of London and Manchester—being acutely aware of its lack of visibility within towns and cities—and is looking for opportunities to engage with partnering local groups, regeneration teams, and the like.

English Heritage has, if anything, dumbed down its offer. What was once the bastion of serious academic understanding and conservation has turned into a commercial organisation desperate to be an attraction—re-enacting battles, creating 'Olde English Fayres', and this year at Bolsover showing Lipizzaner horses riding in the indoor riding school. The organisation still provides excellent guidance and support, and maintains rigour in responding to the planning process, but its public face tends not to shout about these activities.

The Garden History Society has also seen some success in campaign work—following a study day at a modernist water garden (Geoffrey Jellicoe designed gardens in the centre of post-war New Town, Hemel Hempstead), we managed to get front pages on several local newspapers describing the sadly neglected state of this exquisite site followed by two pages in *The Times*. The result is that the local authority has received funding to prepare a conservation management plan.





back wall warm Temperate Biome  
first thought for tender treatment  
Colors need to be more muted.  
Dominic Cole LVC 24 Feb 2000

How do we know what we want to save? I think the statutory English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens—now identifying over 1600 places—is an amazing resource and one that continues to serve us well. There is comprehensive coverage of the country, additions continue to be made, the process of adding a site is rigorous and ‘peer tested’ (and I don’t mean by the House of Lords), and the gradings of significance and extent of designation are usually remarkably fair and accurate. A very helpful companion to the Register is Ray Desmond’s *Bibliography of British and Irish Gardens* (1984). Although in need of updating it is still a brilliant treasure trove. The website of Parks & Gardens UK extends the coverage of sites using research done in individual counties by volunteers in the County Gardens Trusts—this is a work in progress and is increasingly useful as it is more and more populated. And there is also *The Historic Gardens of England* series by Tim Mowl (and his colleagues). I would say the series might be compared to Pevsner’s celebrated *Buildings of England*—a single point of view that is fresh, lively, and good to use alongside the strictly factual, but perhaps more dry sources. The fact that Tim makes sure he walks the sites and weaves in stories of contemporary influences (including the economy, politics, and people) is part of its charm.

Thinking of this creative interpretation, the Garden Museum has been transformed by the energetic and knowledgeable director Christopher Woodward—turning the institution around and putting on a programme of activities, lectures, and exhibitions that regularly get into the national press as ‘things to do’ in London. He oversaw the physical conversion from decaying, deconsecrated church to a light,

modern, buzzing hub of the garden history world. The next stage of transformation will see new spaces built and the possibility of a new home for the Garden History Society.

But despite these gains, the view from my armchair is not universally brilliant. There are still plenty of threats to parks and gardens, but the overall state of awareness and of individuals and organisations willing to stand up for this fantastic resource is different from twenty years ago. There are, I believe, now far more people across the country who understand that garden history is an area of interest and that it is important and even entertaining to understand these places so they do not disappear. Unfortunately the people who ‘get it’ are generally amateur enthusiasts and there is still a dismal lack of understanding of garden history and conservation within local authorities and among professionals such as landscape architects, architects, and planners. Garden history to them is still seen as ‘fuddy duddy’ and for ladies of a certain age. We need to turn this perception around.

[www.gardenhistorysociety.org](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org)

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

[www.parksandgardens.org](http://www.parksandgardens.org)

[www.gardenmuseum.org.uk](http://www.gardenmuseum.org.uk)

Landscape architect **Dominic Cole** worked with Land Use Consultants for almost three decades until 2012 when he established his own practice. With one short interregnum, he has been Chairman of the Garden History Society since 2001 and also chairs the National Trust’s Parks and Gardens Advisory Panel. His projects include interpretation work with Tim Smit at Heligan and master planning for the Eden Project.  
[www.dominiccole.net](http://www.dominiccole.net)

‘The Eden Project grew from the historic garden Heligan, where project founder Tim Smit was using individual plants to tell captivating stories. He wanted to expand this and tell stories on a world scale, hence Eden. Part of my role was to devise a coherent design language to hold everything together.’  
DCLA Dominic Cole  
Landscape Architects





Laura Mayer

# ‘Grecian taste and Roman spirit’: linking erudition and pleasure in garden history

Laura Mayer following in the footsteps of the Dilettanti at the Villa d'Este gardens near Rome contemplating the same scene as depicted in Jacob Lauro's *Antiquae Urbis Splendoris* (1615).

Erudition and pleasure are not mutually exclusive and garden historians can engage with new audiences by presenting research in an enjoyable manner, making scholarship accessible and inclusive.

Recently ejected from the parched wildernesses of a Western Australian holiday, surrounded by family, into a particularly brutal English spring, the blank page in front of me seems more daunting than usual. As the deadline to submit an abstract for a new article approaches, I find I am grappling to pin down the correct tone. ‘Write what you know’, budding authors are always told. But to whom do we, as garden historians, address our writings? That small rump of hard-core devotees perhaps, up to speed with the latest research and fiercely critical? Or the switched-on general reader, mostly interested in garden history because they enjoy visiting historic sites?

The links between scholarship and publishing, and the challenges of writing for different audiences—from the general to the academic—

are becoming all the more pertinent in today’s climate of belt-tightening and inadequate budgets. If garden historians and historic gardens alike are to survive, these fragile bonds must be strengthened. After all, ‘interdisciplinary’ and even ‘transdisciplinary’ are still the buzzwords *du jour*; garden scholars must be adaptable if they wish to succeed in their profession, whilst garden restoration in a time of recession is only possible if it becomes an inclusive sport. In the United Kingdom, English Heritage has been forced to cut hundreds of jobs and face up to a 32% dip in funding over the past three years. Educational opportunities for budding garden historians within Britain are also shrinking, with the closure of successful graduate courses at Bristol—where I was lucky enough to study and continue to live—and Birkbeck Universities. With these cutbacks, a vital source of new research is being lost.

Personally, I have struggled to reconcile a thirst for knowledge and genuine respect for academia with a desire to enlighten (and dare I say it entertain) a wider audience since submitting the first drafts of my PhD thesis. The subject? The Society



of Dilettanti and its formative influence on eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics. In his landmark book *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997), social historian John Brewer defined the Dilettanti as the first English institutional embodiment of the culture of the connoisseur. The club was not, however, formed solely with this worthy intention but rather for the purpose of ‘social and convivial intercourse’. In the century under investigation, this was synonymous with heavy drinking, where the habit of toasting a fellow collector with a Bumper Glass was deemed a compliment to accept and an insult to decline. The aforementioned chapter was returned riddled with red ink, judged sensationalist and journalistic. In an attempt to provide context for the overall work, the temptation to stray into territory best left for the historical novelist had proven too much. Wallowing in the seedy underbelly of the Grand Tour was, it seems, unscholarly.

As my research progressed to encompass the Brownian parkscape and resulting Picturesque backlash, however, the more I realised the Dilettanti really did tread a fine line between bacchanalians and aesthetes. They embodied their motto of ‘Grecian taste and Roman spirit’ in both the literal sense of worshipping Dionysus and Bacchus, as well as through the scholarly promotion of Greco-Roman antiquity. I read recently of a curious theory linking a person’s PhD topic to their life experience, so the irony of defending my enjoyment-seeking patrons with their maxim *seria ludo* (Serious Matters in a Playful Vein) was not lost on me. The Dilettanti formed an erudite club, whose early meetings were nevertheless uproarious in their reference to Hell-Fire ritual. I continued to wrestle with this dichotomy throughout the thesis, and made no apology for it. As the architectural historian James Lees-Milne wrote: ‘Architecture wholly unleavened with historical association is unpalatable stuff’. The history of a garden, without the so-called irrelevant particulars of the men and women who financed or created it, would be similarly lacklustre and spiritless.

Perhaps you might imagine the levels of exasperation when a chapter of my book *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden* was sent back to me to be recast. The editor deemed it too academic for general audiences. This despite University colleagues accusing me of ‘selling out’ by taking on a commercial contract in the first place. Clearly I have much to learn with regard to pitching for publication and reconciling academic ambition within the harsh reality of an economic depression. But even if there were boundless

opportunities for University tenure, how does a pragmatist survive amongst the territorial skirmishes of academic life? Research is wasted if confined to obscure journals and not used to attract new talent into our collective fold. As French novelist and professor of philosophy of professor Muriel Barbery questioned in her novel *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* (2006):

many intelligent people have a sort of bug; they think intelligence is an end in itself. They have one idea in mind: to be intelligent, which is really stupid. And when intelligence takes itself for its own goal, it operates very strangely: the proof that it exists is not to be found in the ingenuity or simplicity of what it produces, but in how obscurely it is expressed.

This personal struggle has made me think about where garden history—a relatively young academic discipline—is headed, practically speaking. If we wish to engage the public in the precious business of conserving our cultural heritage, we must begin by educating this untapped audience in an enjoyable way. This is not to say we dumb down our insights, but rather focus on making information accessible and relatable. The Association of Gardens Trusts, independent garden charities, and the Garden History Society in Britain—and the Australian Garden History Society, National Trust, and Open Gardens Australia—play a vital role in such a dissemination of knowledge.

I refuse to believe that erudition and pleasure are mutually exclusive. In the case of the Dilettanti, such an approach only strengthened that Society’s influence as an intellectual forum, and, as with today’s social networks, provided members with both stimulus and a sense of belonging. Viewed against the backdrop of our increasingly fragmented society, these eighteenth-century voyagers stand out as fiercely associational thinkers, deriving intellectual enjoyment through mental connections. If we can override any lingering academic elitism and apply a similar inclusive way of thinking, there is much we could learn with regard to the conservation of gardens and other designed landscapes. And that is surely something worth raising a Bumper Glass to.

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**Laura Mayer** holds an MA in garden history and a PhD on eighteenth-century landscape design from the University of Bristol. Her Shire book *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden* (2011) is soon to be complemented by *Humphry Repton and the Polite Art of Landscape. The Historic Gardens of England: Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely* (co-written with Professor Timothy Mowl) was published in 2013 by Redcliffe.



Andrea Wulf

# *Adventure, stories, and obsession: garden history is much more than plants and landscapes*

Andrea Wulf on a Gator zigzagging across Mount Vernon, home and garden for almost five decades during the eighteenth century of George Washington, first President of the United States.

Photo: Dean Norton

Writing for a general audience requires special skills, marrying detailed archival research with experience in the field, all presented in lively and accessible prose.

Let me start with an admission—I'm not a gardener and I certainly don't have a green thumb. In fact, when I moved from Germany to Britain in the mid-nineties, I was not even remotely interested in digging and sowing. In Germany I had associated gardening with half-empty flowerbeds planted with a few pansies, immaculately cut lawns, and miles of perfectly trimmed hedges. None of my German friends is a passionate gardener. But when I came to Britain, everybody I met seemed to be obsessed with their herbaceous borders, allotments, and vegetable plots.

I'm still amazed—seventeen years later—how many evenings I have spent listening to my

English friends talking about their horticultural failures and successes, while my German friends think it's a little odd that I write about gardens. I started my research into garden history as a way to understand the British. I'm using gardens as a window to look into the wider world of science, politics, and culture.

I believe that we can only understand what happened in the past when we look at the people who have created these gardens or who risked their lives to collect plants. After all, the term 'history' has the word 'story' in it. So, it's the stories—the personal stories—that are hidden in the parklands, the botanic gardens, or plants that fascinate me. *The Brother Gardeners* (2008) tells the story of a group of men—botanists, plant collectors, and gardeners—who changed the world of horticulture and who started a garden revolution in the eighteenth century. They turned Britain into a



nation of amateur gardeners. Luckily, they wrote lots of letters to each other, which allowed me to bring them alive—reading those accounts was a journey of discovery.

Many of the manuscripts that I found when I researched *The Brother Gardeners* might not sound very exciting on first thought—say, for example, the minutes of the meetings of the Society of Apothecaries who ran the Chelsea Physic Garden in London. However, when you open the huge leather-bound book, there are pages upon pages of immaculate handwriting, describing in great detail the day-to-day running of the garden from the early eighteenth century. Then, towards the end of the 1750s, the handwriting suddenly becomes very messy, an almost undecipherable scrawl which is smudged here and there with round circles and stains—the remnants of many glasses of wine. There was a new committee and the meetings were now held in the tavern next to the Chelsea Physic Garden. Coincidentally that was the time when the committee made some rather erratic decisions about the organisation of the garden—and clearly they were drunk.

It took me months to go through the eight editions of Philip Miller's *Gardeners Dictionary* (published from 1731 to 1768). This seemed a lot of work at the time—but it was worth it because Miller always updated his dictionary with each edition in order to include newly cultivated plants in England. This allowed me to identify exactly when certain plants had been introduced and how gardeners had struggled (or not) with them. Most exciting were the letters because they were filled with all the information I needed to understand 'my' protagonists.

One of my favourites is Joseph Banks who joined James Cook on the *Endeavour* voyage. Banks was a passionate botanist and one of the wealthiest landowners in England. He paid £10,000 for his and his team's passage (a huge sum if compared to Cook's yearly salary of around £100). They set sail in August 1768 and arrived three months late in Rio de Janeiro. Banks couldn't wait to go ashore and collect his first plants, but the Portuguese Viceroy of the colony thought they were spies and didn't allow them to leave the *Endeavour*. Stuck on the ship, Banks could see through his telescope trees laden with strange fruits and clambering bougainvilleas dripping with pink blossoms. All was laid out like the seductive wares in an exotic bazaar—so close but still too far away. Banks wrote to a friend that he felt like 'a French man laying swaddled in linen between two of his Mistresses, both naked [and] using every possible means to excite desire'. And later, after his return to

England, Banks gave his wife a piece of dried moss to wear as a brooch. While he thought it a gorgeous botanical specimen, his wife found it boring and unsightly. When she refused to pin it to her blouse, Banks called her a 'Fool that She Likes diamonds better, & Cannot be persuaded to wear it as a botanists wife Certainly ought to do'. Now, that's history how I enjoy it.

For all the pleasure and excitement that archives hold, there are of course the gardens and the landscapes themselves. There is little point in writing about them without having experienced them. For my book *The Founding Gardeners* (2011), I was lucky enough to spend several months in Thomas Jefferson's mountain-top home Monticello, as well as some time at George Washington's Mount Vernon and James Madison's Montpelier (all in Virginia). *Founding Gardeners* is about the American founding fathers and their attitudes to nature, gardens, and agriculture and how that shaped the nation. They invested native species with patriotic sentiment and used their gardens to make political statements. They regarded themselves foremost as gardeners and farmers, rather than as politicians.

And so I found myself sitting on a rocking chair on Washington's porch overlooking the Potomac. Or on a boat out on the river to see how the house would have been approached by Washington himself when he returned in December 1783 after the revolutionary war, or in a hot-air balloon above the garden, or driving across the estate in a Gator. So many things become much clearer when experiencing a landscape—to see, smell, and feel it. Once I had seen Jefferson's spectacular 1000-foot vegetable terrace—neat rows of squashes and cabbages at my feet and the rolling Virginian landscape stretching out into the distance—I understood just what a revolutionary gardener the writer of the Declaration of Independence had been. His garden combined the sublime wilderness of the untamed forest with the productivity of the land—it was a uniquely American garden. I go back there, again and again, always first to the vegetable terrace. Each time, no matter how often I see it, the contrast between the breathtaking view and the orderly rows of vegetables stirs me. I pick up a handful of the red soil and let it run through my fingers and I feel a visceral connection to the founding fathers and to their vision for their nation.

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**Andrea Wulf** is the author of four books, including *The Founding Gardeners* (2011) and *The Brother Gardeners* (2008), which won the American Horticultural Society 2010 Book Award and was long-listed for the Samuel Johnson Prize 2008. She is the Eccles British Library Writer in Residence 2013.

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Trisha Burkitt

## *Valuing past, present, and future in garden history's continuum*

Trisha Burkitt amongst the elms in the wild garden at her home, Bobundara, on the Monaro in southern NSW; and the Steading at Bobundara. The Bobundara homestead is shown opposite. Photos: Donna Gibbons (left) and Trisha Burkitt (right and opposite)

People and places of our memory inspire our appreciation of gardens and imbue garden history with a wonderful continuum from a remembered past to an uncertain future.

Where does it all begin? The genes, the genetic memory, the childhood of two energetic creative parents with an abiding love in creating a garden and running a property in the landscape in which it is grounded. Where every bushwalk meant returning with a rucksack groaning under the weight of a beautiful mossy flat rock for a wall or a path. Where Edna Walling's philosophy was part of the garden language and every visit to friends or family started with a lingering walk through their garden sharing ideas and plants. And where nine years were spent in a school in a garden and bushland.

Growing up in a home and district that dates back to the early nineteenth century, where lawns turned crispy dry in summer and roses were always the early fragrant varieties, where pomegranates grew amongst the lilac, I seemed destined to fall for a similar home and garden to bring my children up in.

Which is why I looked toward the Australian Garden History Society when moving to Bobundara, south of Cooma, as a young mother and novice gardener. I needed to learn, and I have been more rewarded than I ever thought possible in the ensuing years. I am so thankful to the AGHS which has been the source of much of my knowledge and discourse. Having sat at the feet of such wise minds as Sophie Ducker and

Joan Law-Smith and enjoyed ways of thinking imparted by James Broadbent, Peter Watts, Clive Lucas, Trevor Nottle, George Seddon, Victor Crittenden, Anne Latreille, Richard Aitken, Marion Blackwell, John Dwyer, Caroline Grant, Craig Burton, John and Lynne Landy, Sue Ebury, Francis Ebury, Colleen Morris, and Howard Tanner, amongst so many others. I have also been fortunate to work on the landscape component of a number of heritage conservation reports with Peter Freeman.

These, and so many more, have helped me not waver in my respect for senescence in the garden. My earliest memories of real gardens surrounding the simple Georgian homes in the Bungonia district, south-east of Goulburn, where I grew up and, later, travels throughout Australia and abroad have led to such abiding regard for the integrity of the patina of age. As I tend to think metaphorically, I think if we respect the elders in our society who age with humility, dignity, and grace, so too with our buildings and gardens. I am particularly drawn to this regard for age in gardens and architecture in many European countries where there is not the constant obsession with new and slick and smart and losing the all-important spirit of place.

With two full stints on the AGHS National Management Committee, I have been privileged to be involved at a deeper level; as journal editor for almost six years, I was fortunate to have such a brains trust to call on for articles and advice, and as chair of my local branch as well as attending stimulating annual national



conferences, ideas and thoughts have been sown and taken seed.

So too with the AGHS tours which I have been so privileged to be so involved with. The past week—in beautiful autumnal weather—has been spent with wonderfully engaging discussion amongst AGHS members on a tour of the much-loved Monaro district where I have been fortunate enough to live for the past 35 years. How heartening to spend time with such aware, thinking, and worldly people who are interested in so much more than pretty gardens. Their intelligent interest in the landscape as a canvas for the properties we visited and the wonderful interaction with owners and members has been so enriching. This has also strengthened my conviction that our Society has come of age in its interest beyond the garden to embrace the landscape as part of its charter. I have been keen for some time to have the word landscape in our title and would like to see this discussed as part of a future conference forum.

This issue of *Australian Garden History* looks not only at the current state of garden history but also to the future. It is this forward thinking aspect of the Society I find most stimulating and—while challenging—also exciting.

An acceptance of our climate is one of our greatest challenges as a nation of gardeners. Having lived with far lower than average rainfall for much of the time I have lived at Bobundara, I treasure each fall of rain. How grateful I am for water when it falls from the skies above, but mindful of how erratic this is and how vital for my mental health to go with the climate rather than fight it.

In the worst of the long drought, a letter arrived from my Doctor Uncle in Perth with Sir Sidney Kidman's sage words that Australia is a dry continent—accept the dry as normal and treat the good seasons as a bonus. How instantly this changed my thinking. As the brain controls our thoughts, feeding our brains with literature and seeing how other cultures and people cope with similar challenges is a way to learn acceptance of our own climate.

Water ethics and management is what I consider to be the big challenge of the future and it is by looking back at how our remaining historic gardens coped with a no-additional-water regime for much of their life, that we can learn so much about how to move forward. It is inspiring to visit gardeners who have embraced the climate and challenge of gardening without using precious underground water resources—many of whose gardens I so enjoy taking people to visit on our AGHS tours—and it is so good to see our (perhaps

this is wishful thinking, and it is 'my') garden idyll is not now Anglo-centric. I am so heartened that I am not the only one to garden using only water from the skies above.

Our original inhabitants understood this dry continent; they respected and were judicious with their water sources. It has taken two centuries for us to consider the prospect of living sustainably with our natural resources. Our vast underground water supplies were considered an unending supply but thankfully there is growing awareness of how precious these are and how fragile our water table is.

### *How fortunate to have a Society that not only honours the past but embraces the disciplines of architecture, art, and literature*

Being imbued with the philosophies of Edna Walling and Gordon Ford, both thinkers with an environmental conscience, it is as much their awareness and ideals as their spatial design that I admire and draw on. Perhaps it was their sowing the seed of space that has made me so passionate about the sparseness of much of our natural Australian landscape. Just as Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin used space as such an important element in their design for the national capital, and as Gordon Ford would talk about mass and void, it is the areas between the garden and the suburbs and cities that are so important.

How fortunate to have a Society that not only honours the past but embraces the disciplines of architecture, art, and literature, and is sufficiently forward thinking to be an advocate for our growing environment and to look at the landscape beyond the constraints of the garden or park fence.



Trisha Burkitt's latest book *Adagio: living and gardening mindfully* is published by Murdoch Books.



## Twigs Way

# *Writing the garden into history: herbals today, gnomes tomorrow*

Twigs Way pondering the relationship between writing and reality; and anonymous gardeners captured forever in an unknown garden.

Garden history has often divided along academic and popular lines, yet there is much to be said for an approach that marries the best of both.

I am what might be described as a 'Jack of all Trades' in garden history—someone who gets asked to turn their hand to anything from naming the top ten popular shrubs of the 1950s suburban garden to discussing symbolism of seventeenth century statuary. In an average week I dash from teaching an introductory day school on the Tudor Garden to editing a small book on Victorian Tea Gardens, just managing to squeeze in giving a talk on eighteenth-century statuary and attend a conference on the tercentenary of Capability Brown. An agent recently approached me for a book synopsis on 'The History of the World in 100 Gardens' adding cheerfully that she needed someone who was willing to tackle all types of gardens across two millennia of history on five continents, and could I deliver it the following week?

I should no doubt be ashamed of this wilful lack of specialism, alarmed at this constant veering between the traditionally academic toward the popular. Indeed when compiling career resumes and curricula vitae for academic audiences I do tend to omit the more esoteric areas of my output: knocking 'Gnomes' on the head and sweeping 'Cottage Gardens' under the carpet. Secretly however I thrive on the variety and breadth of garden history coverage and, perhaps more importantly, the testament it provides to the vibrancy and appeal of this wide-ranging subject to the general public and interested layperson, as well as to the more academically inclined. A history of the world in '100 Gardens' where some represented humanities striving in science, others art, and yet others love, war, or nationhood exactly captured this all-encompassing nature of the study of historic designs—although alas it failed in the end to capture a publisher!

Like most disciplines garden history has gone through several phases in its short life. Initially little known and often misunderstood ('a garden



historian you say? How fascinating ... perhaps you could pop round some time and recommend some plants for my garden?’), the slow but steady rise of county-based gardens trusts in Britain, and the restoration of major historic gardens spread the word and the enthusiasm. The concentration in those early years was on the prime sites and the lead designers, the Stowes and Stourheads of the garden world with their litany of Brownian and Bridgemanic designs. Amateurs spearheaded much of the early research and its publications—academic courses were in their infancy and research methods piggy-backed on archaeology, history, and art. Growth spurts followed, as research into ‘designed landscapes’ became part of the heritage agenda and planning processes, and specialists rose to take on the challenges of these fields. Parks and gardens across the United Kingdom are now classified, graded, and registered and few can now claim to be truly ‘lost’—resulting perhaps in a reflective pause amongst practitioners.

But just as the pioneering thrill might be thought to be dimming, new aspects of the history of gardens appear to re-inspire us. As the media gradually discovered garden history, so its appeal spread. Larger and more varied audiences demanded authors and speakers who could communicate with enthusiasm and relative clarity across the range of the subject. At the same time there has been a call from these audiences for garden history that included their kind of garden rather than a concentration on the grand and the extraordinary. The suburban garden, cottage garden, seaside promenade, public park, and allotment have re-gained their own histories, alongside studies of the fashions and features associated with them. Gnomes stand proud alongside grottoes, glasshouses, and gothic hermitages. This is not a dumbing down of garden history as some might fear, but an exciting recognition of the role that parks and gardens have played—and do play—across all sectors of society: a garden history that reflects its audience, and one that celebrates its diversity and variety.

As austerity has resulted in cuts to government departments responsible for our heritage gardens, new local and regional groups have sprung up to help safeguard sites, often stressing the value of such places to the local community in addition to their international significance. The range of interests and skills within these community groups has often resulted in an explosion of knowledge about the site as family historians flesh

out the lives of the gardeners who worked there, plant lovers resurrect original bedding designs, and amateur archaeologists bring to light long buried features. Within every such Friends group there will always be a small select band who, permanently attired in boiler suits, patiently strip down and re-assemble decayed ironwork glass-housing, old hot walls, pumps and plumbing, and even ancient rusting lawnmowers. Eschewing the famous designers and the once-famous shrubberies, perhaps this boiler-clad clan represent the true inheritors of a garden’s secret heart, beating once more under their ministrations.

*It is this very range of approaches and subject material encompassed by garden history that ... keeps it vibrant and relevant to the modern world*

That garden history has captured the interest and enthusiasm of such a variety of people, from heritage professionals deep in the mysteries of planning legislation to historic lawn mower repairers, from Sunday afternoon weederers to academics specialising in eighteen-century female gardening literature, tells us much about the appeal of not just garden history but the garden throughout history. Just as in the past gardens and landscapes were experienced in many different ways by many different people (owners, visitors, workers, designers, philosophers, poachers) so they can still appeal in so many different ways to a similarly wide range of people. Some may enthuse over the overall design whilst others will focus down to the particular; for some the historic significance, for others the modern experience. Some will attend lectures and talks, others buy books, or watch television with its increasing range of garden history programmes, whilst others will prefer to visit—to experience the reality, to become ‘hands-on’. It is this very range of approaches and subject material encompassed by garden history that, for me, keeps it vibrant and relevant to the modern world.

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**Twigs Way** is a writer, researcher, speaker, and adviser on historic gardens and designed landscapes. Originally qualifying with a PhD in landscape archaeology her approach to garden history is that of the social historian or anthropologist, fascinated by the way in which gardens reflect societies and individuals. She undertakes archival research for English Heritage and other government bodies as well as private clients and publishers.

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Paige Johnson

## *Old gardens, new media*

Paige Johnson blogs, gardens, and develops nanobatteries in Tulsa, Oklahoma.  
Photo: Bethany Deramo

Recent advances in digital technology have seen an exponential rise in the use of electronic communication as a form of social media, and garden history is gasping at its potential.

I have only recently begun to think of myself as a writer—when one has a book contract, this must be at some point be admitted—so writing about my writing, as I am now, feels like being one of the blind men describing the elephant. But when I started blogging about garden history—and make no mistake my contribution to this issue is because of my blogging, not because of my academic articles—I remember that I referred to it not as writing but as talking. If academic articles are like very long lectures then blog posts are like the conversation you have with friends over coffee, telling them excitedly about your latest find.

That was what I was looking for, because upon returning to my nanotechnology laboratory in Oklahoma after a glorious year spent studying garden history at the University of Bristol, I felt suddenly bereft. Not of places I could publish a lecture, but of people who were happy to be happy with me about map regressions and obscure archives and the meaning of ‘shrubby’. Like someone looking to keep up their conversational French, I needed a partner, and I cast myself upon the wideness of the web.

Originally, I had lofty pedagogical goals. I would enlighten my readers by telling them about, say, *The Characteristics of the French Renaissance Garden*, and in so doing polish my own skills in the art. It didn’t turn out that way. Fortunately, because—really—how dull! Instead, I learned why gardens matter to me. And since that took place in a public forum with the opportunity for response and feedback (thank you, internet),



I learned a lot about why gardens matter to other people, too.

If we talk about the culture of gardens throughout time—which is what garden history really is—ultimately that comes down to the relationship of the self to the garden. There's the historical self: the self of the person(s) that made the garden, the self of those who used it or talked about or visited it. And then there is the present day self: me (and others) as we receive and seek to understand the garden. Too much of garden history (and garden writing in general) leaves out those selves. And without them, there is only *The Garden*: a beautiful tree falling in a beautiful forest, but with no one to hear it.

I found that what I cared about was how those 'selves' understood, and made, and responded to gardens. That it was really about people, not just plants. And that's what my readers responded to as well: tales not so much of the garden as of people in and with and through the garden. Signals require a receiver.

Garden historians are fond of contextualising their studies with references to art and literature—media through which garden knowledge and garden thinking was in the past conveyed to people. Who were these people, and what did they think? Too often we don't or can't say. But paintings and poetry, because of the time they take to produce, will always be a long-lagging indicator of garden thought. So it is no wonder that they've been supplanted by the immediacy of other means of publishing one's thoughts and responses to the garden space.

Digital means. Boo, hiss, say many historians. But I say hooray and huzzah and bring it on! More conversation about gardens is always better. And because these conversations—unlike Tudor landscape plans or eighteenth-century letters between gardening pals—are written in internet ink on digital paper that doth not crumble into dust, the historian of the future will finally know much more about the selves of our own garden culture.

Many of the garden greats of the past would have reveled in today's digital milieu. Would the flamboyant William Kent have failed to tweet? Let us not forget that Alexander Pope's famous satiric essay on topiary was published in *The Guardian*, a populist magazine for its day. Today, it would have appeared in the online edition and simultaneously on his blog, accompanied by exemplary photos on Instagram and Tumblr. Comments, trackbacks, and Facebook likes

would allow a historian to gauge, not just guess at, the cultural impact of his ideas. And we'd know a lot more about his storied garden.

Not being a person of leisure and independent estate, as was Pope, I haven't the time to manage multiple digital mediums. I stick to blogging because I like a combination of imagery and text, and because I have little to say that can fit in a tweet of 140 characters or less: I am a scholar, after all. (Which is not to say I'm above Twitter, just that I have written long sentences for too long to be able to change now.) And though I don't publish via micro-blog services such as Instagram or Tumblr, I find the many photos posted online by others essential for providing me with garden imagery. I can now think or write with clarity about gardens I've never seen thanks to their willingness to share.

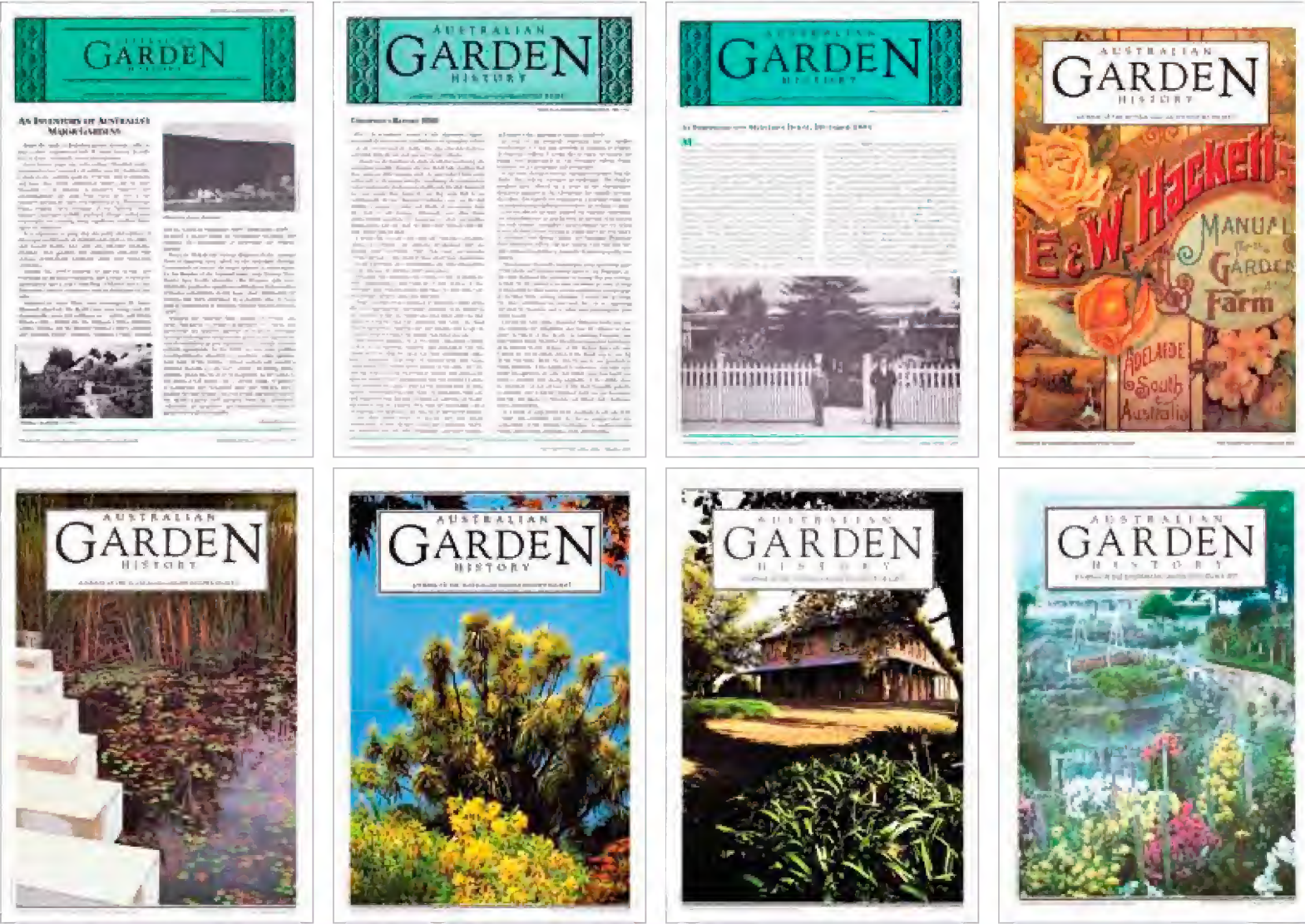
*If academic articles are like very long lectures then blog posts are like the conversation you have with friends over coffee*

So I go on sharing, too. For free, even if some colleagues in academia find that difficult to understand. (Which is a shame because if anyone ought to support the unfettered exchange of human knowledge, it's academics.) I share because writing conversationally—blogging—about garden history has helped me understand it more than has writing about it academically. It has given me the knowledge of the garden-selves, and of my-self, and allowed a bit of writing that began five years ago in tentative loneliness to blossom into enough confidence to make a big publishing company think someone will buy a book about why gardens matter.

In conversation with a friend recently about art history she sighed and said 'understanding is hard'. Truer words for the historian have never been spoken. It's all hands on deck, and the scientist in me cannot fail to welcome more data. So come Blogger, Twitter, Tumblr, and all those yet-to-be-invented. You help us write, you help us understand.

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**Paige Johnson** is both a scientist and a garden historian. She blogs at [gardenhistorygirl.blogspot.com](http://gardenhistorygirl.blogspot.com) and is writing a book, tentatively titled 'The Literate Garden', scheduled for release in 2015 by Norton. Her academic interests include light and sound in the Renaissance garden, atomic gardens of the mid-twentieth century, and the Art Deco garden, which led her into consulting on gardens for the new *Great Gatsby* movie.



Roslyn Burge

# Australian Garden History 1989 to 2013: a jubilee snapshot

Covers of *Australian Garden History* from the first issue (1989) edited by Peter Watts until the close of David Beaver's editorship (1992–94).

Building on the foundations of its predecessors, *Australian Garden History* celebrates its jubilee volume this year and its contents have closely mirrored the interests of Australian Garden History Society members and its wider readership.

Consistently the overwhelming majority of Australian Garden History Society members see their journal as the most important part of belonging to the Society. With verve and justly celebratory, this issue of the *Australian Garden History* marks its silver jubilee. Reading through the 130 issues published since the first volume, in 1989, noting the recalibration and refocussing of that newly

independent journal, the changing styles of its shape and design, and its evolution to the elegant, informative journal of scholarship of garden history across the nation has been a fascinating education.

Each editor has found a way to mould the strength of content and reflect national differences and similarities whilst at the same time ensuring it remains accessible to a diverse readership. Much more than its lush images, in its research and analysis of a broad sweep of garden history—the civic and private gardens, cultural landscapes, plant exploration, and ornamentation—the journal has unveiled places familiar and otherwise. It has established a significant record of scholarship, shaping and influencing our understanding



of 'what is garden history' and creating an international reputation for the AGHS.

But *Australian Garden History* has built on the work of its predecessors and in the full spectrum of the Society's span, the life of the journal falls into three periods: four early volumes (1980–82); an association with the *Australian Garden Journal*, published from the Society's office base in Bowral; then from 1989 when the Society established its office in Melbourne, resumed responsibility for the publication, and stamped its newfound independence with a retitled journal bearing its current name and volume numbering that began anew.

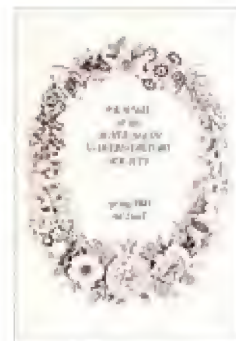
Barely six months after the Society was formed a first journal was published in September 1980, its buff coloured boards decorated with a finely drawn garland of flowers by Joan Law-Smith (later the Society's inaugural patron). Whatever the visual differences between then and now, the Society's journal has continued the high standard of content and production which many dedicated editors, editorial panels, and national committees have steered steadfastly through shoals and technological revolutions.

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch reiterated the Society's ambition for its journal and heralded its scope in her inaugural chairman's address in that first modest edition in 1980: there was a 'great deal of research to be done' to produce a 'really interesting, authoritative, and communicative publication'. As the foundation stone of the AGHS and its most important product, the challenges of balancing historical scholarship, book reviews, and news for a diverse readership, have been carefully weighed

by editors and editorial committees who have guided the publication by continually questioning the journal's purpose and content. Since 1989 *Australian Garden History* has been supported by the generosity of its contributors and nurtured by ten editors over 25 volumes, each of whom has given energy and time beyond measure to produce a remarkable record of the history of Australian gardens and garden making.

Miranda Morris-Nunn from Tasmania edited the first three issues of the original publication, *Journal of the Australian Garden History Society*. Interviewed in 2003 she recalled its typed pages were produced with the latest technology of the early 1980s, a daisy wheel typewriter (Miranda Morris-Nunn, interviewed by Sallyann Dakis, 14 June 2003). Material was posted to the editorial committee in Melbourne, where member Anne Latreille remembered the very hands-on process: pages were laid 'out along that white paved alleyway here in our house and we would assemble all the pages and patch it all up and cut and paste and make it fit' (Anne Latreille, interviewed by Roslyn Burge, 30 November 2010).

The various journal covers might map the changes and challenges the Society faced through the years. Those four early issues (1980–82) were simply produced and drew heavily on contributions from founding members, reflecting the modest means of an embryonic society. From 1983–89, the *Australian Garden Journal* (edited by AGHS Secretary and journal owner, Tim North, and his wife Keva) became the 'official journal' of the Australian Garden History Society: colour was initially introduced simply in a green



Cover of the Australian Garden History Society's first ever journal, published in the year the Society was established (1980) and adorned with a finely drawn garland by Joan Law-Smith.

## ***Australian Garden History*: summary of editorships**

### **1989–90**

Peter Watts, editor

- 4 issues: 1 (1), 1989 to 1 (4), 1989/90

### **1990–92**

Richard Aitken & Georgina Whitehead, co-editors

- 15 issues: 1 (5), 1990 to 4 (1), 1992

### **1992–94**

David Beaver, editor

- 13 issues: 4 (2), 1992 to 6 (2), 1994

### **1994**

c/- AGHS office

- single 16pp issue: 6 (3), 1994

### **1995**

Richard Aitken & Karen Olsen, guest editors

- single 40pp issue: 6 (4), 1995

### **1995–2000**

Trisha Dixon, editor

- 35 issues: 6 (5), 1991 to 12 (3), 1995–2000

### **2001–06**

Nina Crone, editor

- 30 issues: 13 (4), 2001 to 17 (5), 2006

### **2006–07**

Tony Fawcett, editor

- 3 issues: 18 (1), 2006 to 18 (3), 2006/07

### **2007**

Genevieve Jacobs, editor

- 4 issues: 18 (4), 2007 to 19 (2), 2007

### **2007–08**

Richard Aitken, editorial coordinator, assisted by Colleen Morris, Christine Reid, and Jackie Courmadias

- 3 issues: 19 (3), 2007 to 19 (5), 2008

### **2008–13**

Christina Dyson & Richard Aitken, co-editors

- 21 issues: 20 (1), 2008 to 25 (1), 2013

AGHS member Kirstie McRobert, a librarian at the State Library of Victoria, has compiled an index of *Australian Garden History*. Indexes to Volumes 1–20 (1989–2009) are now available and it is intended that this invaluable resource be continued into the future.



Cover array from the very productive editorial tenures Trisha Dixon (1995–2000) and Nina Crone (2001–06), an astonishing span of 65 journals.

masthead where the garland was replaced with a medieval sketch of closely arrayed garden beds and a black and white photograph filled the cover. Between 1985–89 covers were full colour photographs of gardens and plants. By the end of the decade, however, the AGHS faced ‘a very difficult moment because we either had to go over and be a sort of rose and daffodil fancier’s society, which wasn’t what we had in mind, or stay a smaller enterprise focussed on design and history, intellectual papers, and so forth’ (Howard Tanner, interviewed by Roslyn Burge, 26 February 2004).

The year 1989 was an extremely difficult one—a watershed chronicled by Jocelyn Mitchell in her Chairman’s Report for that year. At the same time the AGHS found a new, permanent office at Birdwood Avenue within Melbourne’s Royal Botanic Gardens it also resumed sole responsibility for producing a journal after an arduous disengagement from the *Australian Garden Journal*. Both ventures represented major steps forward for the Society but the financial impost, and the precarious financial situation of the Society generally, required a return to a modest publication with a focus ‘more relevant to our Society’, according to Jocelyn Mitchell.

The Society was not yet a decade old. Peter Watts stepped into the breach as founding editor in 1989 of the Society’s newly independent journal and reminded members of the original aims of the Society: ‘to bring together those with an interest in the various aspects of garden history—horticulture, landscape design, architecture and related subjects’.

Retitled *Australian Garden History*, Vol. 1, No. 16 (a typo, it should have been No. 1!) reasserted the Society’s original historical focus and re-established a national scholarly direction. The journal was black and white, with a single colour as a design element. Jocelyn Mitchell marked the past successes of the AGHS in her editorial and looked to the future, detailing those sections to be included in the journal, a pattern largely followed to the present time: editorial, feature articles, garden profiles, letters to the editor, a wide range of book reviews (mixing Australian and international titles), events, and news.

One of the strengths of the AGHS has been its understanding of its origins and in his leading article in that first volume, Howard Tanner looked back to the ‘nurturing’ Peter Watts had provided to the nascent Society a decade earlier, and how much progress had been made in researching





and writing about Australian garden history. Continuity of the journal's run was imperative and by the end of 1989 (in spite of a precarious finances) Vol. 1, No. 4 was still produced, albeit a slender journal (a single folded A3 sheet), reflecting the Society's tight financial situation.

In 1990 co-editors were appointed, Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead. They introduced the first colour cover and a newer style of masthead. There had been comments about the Society's emphasis on grand nineteenth-century gardens but a number of articles about an early twentieth century cottage garden in Western Australia (reinforcing the value of such gardens to the historical record—and the value of oral history), interwar gardens, and the importance of the bush garden style of Betty Maloney and Jean Walker dislodged any discontent about this direction.

Singling out any editor is invidious, however, during 1995–2000 Trisha Dixon edited 35 issues and from 2001–06 Nina Crone edited 30 issues—each outstanding achievements. These two consecutive editors oversaw the production of the journal for just over eleven years, a period of steady influence with an impressive number of individuals invited to present guest editorials and other contributions.

Trisha introduced a new cover design in 1995, one that remains in use and gives the journal a pleasing consistency across time. Christina Dyson and Richard Aitken were appointed as co-editors in 2008, building on Richard's earlier tenure with Georgina Whitehead during 1990–92.

Increasingly the journal has focused on cultural landscapes and broader national themes, but at its heart, people and their garden making have always remained the journal's great strength. Editors and committees have continually questioned the purpose of the journal. In recent years new readers have been gained through online access. Covers have become increasingly contemporary. There is a new age of maturity not only in garden history, as Colleen Morris stated in 2009 in her final editorial as national chair, but also in the journal, which she regarded as underpinning the economic and spiritual health of the Society and the strength of its intellectual basis.

Covers representing the current editorial tenure of Christina Dyson and Richard Aitken, reflecting the diversity of the journal's breadth of view over the last five years.

**Roslyn Burge** is a Sydney-based historian who makes extensive use of oral history. She has conducted many of the interviews for the Australian Garden History Society Oral History Project.





Annabel Neylon & Timothy Hubbard

# *A national review of inventories of historic gardens, trees, and landscapes*

Killymoon, in Tasmania's Fingal Valley, photographed for Howard Tanner's seminal exhibition *Converting the Wilderness* (1979), highlights Australia's fragile garden heritage. Photo: Richard Stringer

A recent report commissioned by the Australian Garden History Society provides a national review of inventories of historic gardens, trees, and landscapes to guide the conservation of this significant cultural resource.

Within the broader field of heritage conservation, the recognition of gardens is a relatively recent phenomenon. During its establishment in the post-war period, the National Trust initially highlighted buildings of architectural and historical merit—*Walkabout* magazine wondered aloud if there might be more than a dozen Australia-wide worthy of the Trust's top ranking. Yet during the 1960s, as community consciousness of heritage expanded, listings expanded to include shearing sheds, shop verandahs, and other unsung

building types alongside stately public buildings and mansions. And in 1963 a seminal moment occurred with the battle to save Melbourne's Rippon Lea from subdivision, for it was the garden rather than the (then) unfashionable brick house that was the more highly prized attribute.

While the National Trust movement expanded its listing of heritage places, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that gardens were routinely included. It was during this period that government heritage bodies were also widening their own scope, mirroring the move outwards from buildings to a far wider range of culturally significant places. It was these government bodies that also had the legislative power to list places to safeguard their conservation, a strategy not available to the National Trust.

Interest in heritage conservation at local government level also began to accelerate during



the 1980s and 1990s, with comprehensive heritage studies often including gardens and other designed landscapes. Whereas during the 1970s it was unusual to include a garden as anything other than curtilage to a building, increasingly gardens were being included as places of significance in their own right (as well as for their ensemble qualities). It should come as no surprise that the Australian Garden History Society was founded in 1980 at the height of this burgeoning interest in the conservation of Australia's cultural heritage. Yet apart from some early lists and the inclusion of gardens in the AGHS co-published *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (2002), the Society has not produced any official list of historic gardens and landscapes.

Much of this interest and activity at local, state, and federal government levels and by the National Trust movement generated assessments of significance, inventories, and lists of significant places, some with statutory force. Information was then marshalled into disparate inventory and database systems, which were more or less based on the same guiding principles, philosophy, and significance criteria enshrined in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. Since each of these inventories had been developed independently, however, the information, research, and analysis they contained were of varying quality and comprehensiveness, and not all of the material was readily accessible.

The AGHS recognised that a comprehensive list of significant historic gardens for each of the states and territories would assist its advocacy work. The Society was also aware that there were inconsistencies across the suite of existing lists of places of heritage significance. It was felt that if the Society knew more about existing heritage lists—their scope, criteria, availability, quality, and gaps—it could make better use of them to help determine the significance of specific gardens or use them to start drawing up its own list. This would greatly aid the Society's advocacy, education, and research activities.

In 2010 the AGHS commissioned a pilot study by Catherine Brouwer Landscape Architects in association with Nissen Associates, to examine how well historic gardens were represented on heritage lists in Queensland. The Brouwer study concluded that while the Queensland Heritage Register includes some gardens, and the database was easy to search, gaps exist and in general this register is oriented to buildings. Few gardens are included on local government lists. The model and results of this study formed the basis for the

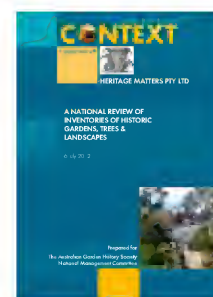
national survey that was commissioned by the AGHS in December 2011.

The scope of the national survey was historic gardens, trees, and landscapes. The term 'garden' was to include public parks and gardens (including cemeteries and railway station gardens), private gardens of all sizes and locations, avenues, and arboreta. Landscapes, or more precisely cultural landscapes, were to include those designed and created intentionally by humans, organically evolved landscapes, and associative landscapes. While the World Heritage Convention definition of cultural landscapes also includes broad acre natural landscapes with specific social or aesthetic values, the scope of the AGHS national survey extended only to designed and evolved landscapes. This encompassed planted significant trees, and trees which have a special historical or other cultural heritage value.

The report found that despite the high regard across the community for historic gardens, trees, and landscapes, they have been neglected in favour of built heritage in both statutory and non-statutory lists, overlays, and registers across Australia. It advised that existing statutory and non-statutory lists across Australia's states and territories could be collated to form the basis of a list of significant landscapes and gardens both at a state and national level.

While the report is a comprehensive overview of the scope of existing listings and other sources which document significant gardens and landscapes, it stops well short of listing any individual places—that is a task for subsequent consideration. What has been revealed is a wealth of existing data without any national coordination. The hosting of a national database is perhaps beyond the current resources of the Australian Garden History Society, but its voice is an authoritative one and this report gives plenty of food for thought. Already the Society has been able to draw on its content in its submission on the Australian Heritage Strategy.

The Society also needs to think very clearly about the uses to which such a database might be put and how that matches its own objectives. A clear statement of purpose is perhaps the most important task facing the Society as it considers the wide-ranging findings of this report.



The final report is available for consultation on the AGHS website (under the 'Current projects' section).

Annabel Neylon (Context Pty Ltd) & Timothy Hubbard (Heritage Matters Pty Ltd) were authors of 'A National Review of Inventories of Historic Gardens, Trees & Landscapes' (2012).

Over the last few years we have featured many websites of interest to garden historians, but none has more potential than that which hosts digitised copies of early Australian newspapers. When featured in our volume 20 (2009) this was a beta or trial service established in 2008, but since then the site has become part of the National Library of Australia's Trove web portal. With continuous upgrading what was originally an outstanding resource has in the intervening five years become of even greater potential. Forget Pharaonic epochs, Chinese dynasties, or the birth of Christ, Australian historians now refer to research Before Trove (BT) and After Trove (AT).

*Forget Pharaonic epochs,  
Chinese dynasties, or the birth of Christ,  
Australian historians now refer to research  
Before Trove (BT) and After Trove (AT)*

Australia has been favoured with several copying projects of substance and lasting benefit. One thinks of the massive Australian Joint Copying Project, commenced in 1945, bringing together a mass of disparate documents relating to Australia and the Pacific held in repositories in the United Kingdom. In this way, for instance, important correspondence and reports from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew for the period 1793–1928 are available in major Australian reference libraries on microfilm. Or the Correspondence of Ferdinand Von Mueller project, bringing together the dispersed correspondence of this noted colonial botanist, whose own copies of letters were destroyed in unspecified circumstances after his death. But this rich resource is available only through selected letters in three published volumes, with the bulk of the letters in photocopied form and some even awaiting full transcription.

The digitisation of Australian newspapers is not the only major capture project—one thinks of the excellent newspaper digitisation project available through the British Library and National Library of New Zealand, or American's National Digital Newspaper Program. What distinguishes the digitised Australian newspapers, though, is that unlike the pay-per-view British Library copies, ours are available free to anyone with access to

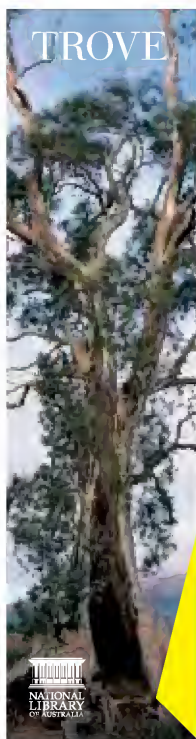
the internet—as are those for New Zealand and the United States. The text of each newspaper has also been converted to digital format (using Optical Character Recognition software) permitting keyword searching and this is capable of correction and tagging by users, a ground-breaking feature of the Australian project.

Since the trial website for the digitised Australian newspapers, these have been transferred to the Trove web portal of the National Library of Australia. This has the added benefit that additional information on the same search terms—images, manuscripts, books, journals, music and sound, maps—can also be listed. Using appropriate search terms, states and territories, newspaper titles, dates and date spans, as well as words and phrases may be entered for specific searches.

The other wonderful feature, which makes this website indispensable for Australian garden historians, is that a programme of continuous expansion is being pursued. This means that additional titles are being added as time and finance permits. Whereas the trial site featured a major metropolitan title for each capital city and a representative title for each state, many more titles have since been added, particularly for regional and rural Australia. The selection of additional titles is a rather inexact science and one has to be patient—Bendigo has come online in the last few months; Ballarat and Geelong await major runs to be added. Selection has also been guided by wider social and cultural concerns. For instance, the area so badly devastated by bushfires around Kinglake and Yea has had its regional newspapers added to assist in recovering community memory. And the centenary of Australia's participation in the Great War will see greatly enhanced coverage from 1914–18 to assist in family and local history research.

The challenge for the Australian Garden History Society is to find a means for harnessing the crowd-sourced knowledge derived from this extraordinary resource. This will take some clear thinking and a bold new direction whereby individuals are empowered to act on behalf of the Society to ensure that collective knowledge can advance our aims in previously undreamt ways.

**Richard Aitken**





# For the bookshelf

Eugenia W. Herbert, *Flora's Empire: British gardens in India*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2011 (ISBN 9780812243260): hardback, 420pp, RRP \$US45

Garden history all too infrequently lingers on regions, outposts, and entrepôts. More often the gaze is inwards, on dominant cultures and their gardens; on a palette of canonical places, celebrated designers, and high style. Yet in this fascinating book Eugenia Herbert has crafted a work that has elements of both, by focussing on a dominant garden culture in an unfamiliar setting. India was never a British colony, yet from the mid-eighteenth century until the late 1940s, it remained strongly under an imperial yoke.

Herbert's nine chapters marshal her diverse, diffuse, and sprawling material effectively. In sequence we learn of adaptation by gardeners abroad—early colonial gardens, the focus of Calcutta, hill stations—before canvassing gardens of empire—botanic gardens, Lucknow and its post-1857 remaking, Curzon's restoration of the Taj Mahal, Delhi and its gardening antecedents, Imperial New Delhi. Introductory and concluding chapters frame this rich historical terrain. Gardens and their plants, those who created and enjoyed them, and the small army of workers who maintained them all received generous coverage.

Herbert's writing is comprehensively researched, astutely observed, and engagingly if sometimes languidly written: in this it reminded me of Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory*—in need of a reductive edit, but with not much that one would want to lose. As expected of a major American university press the book is beautifully presented and effectively illustrated, but the lack of a map showing places under review is beyond comprehension.

In her last chapter, Herbert rhetorically asks of garden imperialism: 'can we justify the term'? She ultimately concludes that such gardens in British India arguably 'happened piecemeal'; but not before observing that 'A passion for gardens was by no means limited to India or to the British. Rival powers, such as the French and the Dutch, put their own stamp on their imperial landscapes, but none did so on the scale or with such lasting effect as the British'.

Richard Aitken

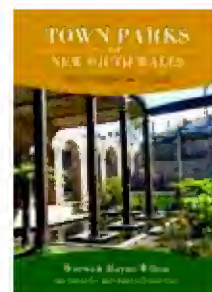
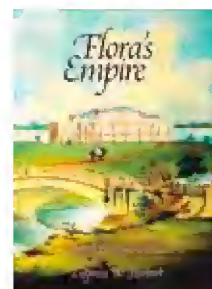
Warwick Mayne-Wilson, *Town Parks of New South Wales: past, present, and future*, Warwick Mayne-Wilson Heritage Landscape Consultants, Sydney, 2013 (ISBN 9780987537904): 199pp, eBook (downloaded as a PDF file), RRP \$29.95; limited copies available in paperback, RRP \$49.95 plus postage (for AGHS members)

[www.maynewilson.com.au](http://www.maynewilson.com.au)

Within its geographical scope, *Town Parks of New South Wales* brings together an impressively large number of public parks spanning a generous historical period (just over a century). The publication's broad issues and concerns should make it of substantial interest to all users, however, and in particular managers of the many complex values embodied by parks. There is no comparable Australian publication and many of the themes and patterns in the historical evolution of town parks explored in the earlier chapters are also reflected in other places beyond NSW. *Town Parks* looks at the initial establishment in NSW of governors' domains, market squares, and public commons, through to the mania for town park creation as a means of celebrating the centenary of European settlement in 1888. The other end of the timespan, from the 1970s, saw the creation of alternative kinds of public parkland on landscapes reclaimed and transformed from former industrial sites around Sydney's harbour foreshores—most notably by 'trailblazer' landscape architect Bruce Mackenzie.

This breadth of coverage is matched by considerable depth of research that reflects the author's long-standing practice as a conservation landscape architect, and the many historic and contemporary photographs, and other documentary sources reproduced in the book, indicate a vast collection of documentary materials and knowledge built over many years. The final chapter provides a representative selection of forty town parks in NSW. The website notes that the intent of the collection presented in this chapter is that it be added to and updated as research continues. This highlights a major benefit of an e-publication; the ability to relatively easily update and add to the document as new research is completed or as new information comes to light. In the words of the author: 'the book seeks to stimulate a broader debate on the future possibilities of town parks—not only in New South Wales but more widely in Australia'.

Christina Dyson



## Apology and correction

In our last issue, the publishing details of Andrew Saniga's *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia* were incorrect due to a production error. The correct details are as follows:

Andrew Saniga, *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2012 (ISBN 9781742233550): paperback, 400pp, RRP \$69.99

Our apologies to the author, publisher, and reviewer Dr Dianne Firth.

John Wrigley's  
*Eucalypt Flowers*  
(NLA Publishing,  
RRP \$34.99)

contains a wonderful  
potpourri of historic  
botanical illustrations  
carefully curated  
and annotated by an  
acknowledged expert.

Detail from Ellis Rowan,  
*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*  
(1880s)



## Recent releases

**Brent Elliott, *RHS Chelsea Flower Show: a centenary celebration*, Frances Lincoln Limited, London, 2013 (ISBN 9780711234512): hardback, 200pp, RRP £25**

This is essential reading for anyone who has been, is planning, or aspires to attend the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show. And for the rest of us who must make do with Australian winters, there is still plenty to enjoy. In less capable hands this celebratory centennial volume may have succumbed to institutional hagiography, but long-time RHS librarian and historian Brent Elliott has delivered an attractive volume rich in narrative and astute in its thematic treatment of the diverse horticultural pleasures that have marked this annual feast.

**Penny Olsen, *Collecting Ladies: Ferdinand von Mueller and women botanical artists*, NLA Publishing, Canberra, ACT, 2013 (ISBN 9780642277534): paperback, 248pp, RRP \$39.99**

Penny Olsen makes the most of her subject matter in this biographical treatment of fourteen botanical artists—the nineteenth-century 'sisters of science' who did so much to collect and document Australia's plant world—and the man who sat at the centre of a massive collecting empire, colonial botanist Ferdinand von Mueller. Engagingly written, profusely illustrated, and deftly packaged, this popular

introduction perhaps unintentionally points to the difficulties of publishing in both the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, and the complex relationships negotiated between individuals and institutions inside and outside the mainstream.

**Damon Young, *Philosophy in the Garden: eleven great authors, and the ideas they discovered in parks, yards and pots*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780522857139): paperback, 208pp, RRP \$24.99**

'Philosophy was often alfresco' writes Damon Young in this spritely account of eleven author-philosophers. Some—like Jane Austen—are at the authorial end of the spectrum, while others—Voltaire for instance—sit at the philosophical end. In between are Proust, Woolf, Nietzsche, Colette, Rousseau, Orwell, Dickinson, Kazantzakis, and Sartre. Each is encapsulated by a targeted theme—the consolations of Chawton Cottage for Austen; the bonsai in the bedroom for Proust—that serves as a focus for these chapter-length horto-biographical portraits, all seen through the lens of philosophy. Recently reprinted, the book has struck a chord with a wide general readership, but has perhaps been off the radar screen for garden historians. So take the plunge: the writing is fresh, the observations discursive, and the garden (or its constituent elements) placed front and centre.



# Dialogue

## The shaping of Eryldene

An iconic house and garden of the twentieth century reaches its centenary. What were the ideas and inspiration behind the design and development of Eryldene, the building commissioned in 1913 by E.G. Waterhouse from architect William Hardy Wilson and the later development of its gardens and outbuildings? A range of prominent speakers including Colleen Morris, Dr James Broadbent, Jackie Menzies, and Maisie Stapleton will delve into the tastes and artistic influences that have shaped Eryldene and its gardens, with a special focus on the growing appreciation of Chinese art, decoration and design in twentieth-century Australia. A joint event by the Eryldene Trust and the Historic Houses Trust of NSW will explore these themes over two days, Saturday 27–Sunday 28 July 2013.

[www.hht.net.au](http://www.hht.net.au)

[www.eryldene.org.au](http://www.eryldene.org.au)

## Honouring Kevin Taylor

In the winter issue of *Naturelink*, the newsletter of our friends at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Director Chris Russell writes movingly of the sculpture ‘Secrets of Lightness’, unveiled on 3 May 2013. A collaboration between Janet Laurence, Kate Cullity, and David Lancashire, this ethereal work commemorates the late Kevin Taylor and his contribution to the genesis and fruition of The Australian Garden at Cranbourne from his central role in the original design and masterplan in 1994 until his tragic death in 2011. The glass sculpture incorporates etchings of Kevin Taylor’s handwriting, encapsulating his thoughts and observations on our relationship with the Australian landscape, a poignant and inspirational reflection.



The ‘Secrets of Lightness’ memorial sculpture to Kevin Taylor in the Box Garden of The Australian Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, by Janet Laurence with David Lancashire and Kate Cullity.



## History and horticulture at Chelsea Flower Show

Chelsea celebrates its centenary this year and Brent Elliott’s history of the show is reviewed opposite. A gold medal and the ‘best in show’ award went to Philip Johnson and Fleming’s Nurseries for their Trailfinders Australian Garden exhibit in the Show Garden category, placing our rich traditions of horticulture and garden making on an international stage. Less heralded has been the release—to coincide with Chelsea—of a new report *Horticulture Matters*, outlining the growing crisis in horticulture threatening the economy, environment and food security in the United Kingdom. Whilst this is UK specific, much of the report is relevant elsewhere, including Australia.

[www.rhs.org.uk/News/Horticulture-Matters](http://www.rhs.org.uk/News/Horticulture-Matters)

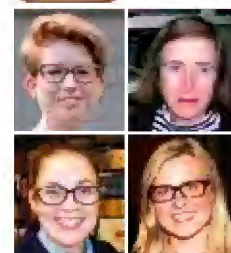
## Going viral

We have long wanted to take advantage of social media to promote *Australian Garden History* and now the editors have taken the plunge with the anointing of four social media ambassadors. Using the smartphone app Instagram—which combines image uploading, micro-blogging, and hash tagging capabilities—we will be spreading images and text around the globe. In this brave new world, hierarchical and patriarchal attitudes of old media and traditional ways of thinking are replaced by a multiplicity of voices acting individually and in concert; new demographics are engaged as the power of the crowd is sourced and channeled. The mood is quirky and immediate. Fustiness is blown out of the water. Who knows where it will lead? Be very afraid! (And if you haven’t understood any of the above, please ask your grandchildren.)

[#australiangardenhistory](https://twitter.com/australiangardenhistory)

While the house at Eryldene exhibits a sophisticated architectural simplicity, influenced by Hardy Wilson’s studies of colonial architecture, its extensive gardens and outbuildings reveal a diversity of influences.

Photo: David Tunny



Our inaugural social media ambassadors: Jess, Vicki, Ruth, and Jane.



## Notice of 33rd Annual General Meeting

The 33rd Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society will be held on Sunday, 20 October 2013, at 8.30 am at The Armidale School – TAS Hoskins Centre, entry via Douglas/Brown Streets, Armidale, NSW. Items to be included on the agenda should be posted or emailed to the AGHS office.

Branches are asked to nominate their representative to the National Management Committee and to inform the Secretary, Lynne Walker (c/- AGHS office) by 21 August 2013.

There will be four vacancies for elected positions on the National Management Committee this year. Lynne Walker, Trisha Dixon-Burkitt, John Dwyer, and John Viska have served the maximum terms permitted in the AGHS constitution. Nominations for positions on the National Management Committee open on 15 July 2013 and close on 30 August 2013. Elected members serve for a three-year term and are eligible for re-election for a maximum of one additional term.

To obtain a nomination form, contact the AGHS office by phone on (03) 9650 5043 or 1800 678 446 (toll free) or email [info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

Elections offer an opportunity for members to participate in the management of the Society. Each year the National Management Committee holds three face-to-face, full-day meetings in February, June, and prior to the annual national conference. These meetings are interspersed with

three one-hour telephone link-up meetings in April, August, and December. An allowance to alleviate travel costs for the meetings in Sydney and Melbourne is available if required.

## The Botanic Garden: photographic relation and exchange

Opening this September at the Santos Museum of Economic Botany in the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide is Jessica Hood's photographic exhibition concluding her research *The Botanic Garden: photographic relation and exchange*. Jessica published an article about her research in AGH 23 (3), 2012, facilitated by the editorial mentoring programme of the Nina Crone Fund. This exhibition focuses on a series of black and white transparencies of trees taken in the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide c.1930, which will be exhibited alongside comparable colour photographs of trees Jessica has taken recently, at both the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. During the exhibition Jessica will be conducting a series of talks beginning in the museum and including particular aspects of the garden itself that have informed the photographs exhibited. The exhibition runs from 2–29 September 2013.

[www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/Visit/Adelaide\\_Botanic\\_Garden/Santos\\_Museum\\_of\\_Economic\\_Botany](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/Visit/Adelaide_Botanic_Garden/Santos_Museum_of_Economic_Botany)

In the exhibition this pairing of images sets up a comparison between the old and new photographs inviting the viewer to 'walk down the garden path' and attempt to discover each photograph in the actual garden.







## From the chair

I succeeded John Dwyer to the post of Chairman of the Australian Garden History Society National Management Committee at the annual general meeting held in Ballarat last November. I am very honoured to be in this position and working with the NMC to guide the Society through the next few years. And while it is somewhat daunting to be in a position that has been occupied in recent years by John, Colleen Morris, and Peter Watts, I find that they have delivered a Society that is in good shape and with no serious problems demanding urgent attention.

Our eight branches are strong and each year mount a programme of talks and visits of wide scope and which attract good numbers of members. The diversity and inventiveness of branch programmes fills me with admiration. I realise that for many members, their branch and its activities constitutes their experience of the Society, and some members may wonder what the NMC does, if they think of it at all. The branches are very independent and I think of the Society as a loosely knit group of nine entities—the eight branches and the NMC—though the NMC is ultimately responsible. I count this breadth as one of the strengths of the Society.

*Australian Garden History* achieves a consistently high standard and I consider that it is a major achievement that a society of our modest size produces such a high quality journal. We are fortunate to have erudite and skilled editors in Christina Dyson and Richard Aitken. We have published three volumes of *Studies in Australian Garden History*, containing papers of academic merit, and intend continuing its publication.

The Society's annual national conference is always fully booked, and the NMC acknowledges that as far as possible the conference should accommodate all members who wish to attend. However the conference is now being held in regional cities and not all have venues that can accommodate more than 200 delegates. The pre- and post-conference tours, and an autumn tour, organised through the genius of Trisha Burkitt, are popular with members, and the possibility of offering an overseas tour is under discussion.

And in Phoebe LaGerche Wijsman we have found an Executive Officer who provides the high level of pleasant service to members that we enjoyed from Jackie Courmadias. It is quite clear to me that the EO and her assistant Janet Armstrong are the engines that have the Society running smoothly.

The Society continues to be financially viable and we have been fortunate to enjoy the dedication and commitment of NMC member Kathy Wright as our treasurer. Making sure that members get value for their annual subscriptions is of great interest and importance to me. From talking to members at conferences and events I gather that generally people are satisfied with their membership of the Society.

The Society's interests and activities range widely, from supporting academic publications and studies, through national conferences and branch events including working bees, to support for conservation of culturally significant gardens and other designed landscapes. The NMC will continue to support these efforts so that membership continues to offer a rich mix of

The group on the AGHS Monaro tour this autumn, at Micalago Station where George Lambert painted his celebrated landscape *The Squatters Daughter* (1923–24).

Photo courtesy Trisha Burkitt

opportunities to learn about and visit significant gardens and participate in their conservation. The NMC believes that in the next few years we should pay more attention to conservation, especially in terms of climate change and its impact on older gardens and their plantings.

Membership is an issue to which the NMC is continuously devoting attention. We believe that with appropriate publicity we could attract significantly more members, whose subscriptions would help meet our annual expenses, and whose numbers would add to our advocacy efforts. We should be more active in publicising what we offer, and the work the Society does in the field of heritage conservation.

Looking at the environment in which the Society operates, we have few competitors and some natural allies with whom we work on events or projects or advocacy. But we are in a time when governments are taking less interest in heritage, and this means that our advocacy needs to be sharper and our partnerships significantly expanded. The branches deliver most of our advocacy effort and our effectiveness varies amongst branches and over time, as branch committee membership changes. The NMC has discussed how to improve our advocacy and if the national office might support branches in putting our view forward on important issues.

Over the last three years the NMC and the branches have worked together to fund restoration projects in significant gardens such as Buda at Castlemaine, Eryldene in Sydney, Koroit Botanic

Gardens in western Victoria, and Myall Park in Queensland. This is a very practical programme to conserve heritage gardens and more projects will be funded in 2013–14. I hope that members are pleased to know that some of the Society's resources are going to conservation works on the ground in significant gardens.

Over the last three years the Society has also investigated how well gardens are represented on state and local government heritage lists, and it is clear that these lists are building-centric, meaning that heritage gardens do not receive the protection they should. Should the Society have its own list of significant heritage gardens, available on the website?

We will continue to provide some financial support for new books on garden and landscape history, and to publish our peer-reviewed *Studies in Australian Garden History*. We will also keep up to date on developments in electronic publishing and take advantage of new techniques to improve and diversify the means by which members receive the Society's publications and services.

I look forward to chairing the Society's management committee as it guides the organisation over the next few years. I envisage the Australian Garden History Society building on its strengths to provide members with stimulating and enjoyable talks, garden visits, conferences and publications, and acting to conserve our garden heritage. And to work towards sharing these rich and rewarding experiences with many more new members.

**John Taylor**

## Diary dates

### JULY 2013

#### Wednesday 10 The cultural landscape of Lord Howe Island

SYDNEY

Illustrated talk by Chris and Margaret Betteridge. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 non-members, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)

#### Saturday 20 Burnley Gardens walk and talk

VICTORIA

The second in our winter lecture series will trace the history of Burnley, its plantings, and its evolution into the 21st century. Speakers include Andrew Smith, Michele Adler, Geoff Olive, and a team of Burnley guides. Supper and a panel discussion will follow a tour of the Gardens. 3–6pm, Burnley Campus, 500 Yarra Boulevard, Richmond (Melway ref 45 A12). This is a joint event with the Friends of Burnley Gardens. Register online [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/) or contact Anne Vale on 0419 893 523 or [heriscapes@aussiebb.com.au](mailto:heriscapes@aussiebb.com.au)

#### Sunday 28 Twenty-five years as Head Gardener for the Historic Houses Trust of NSW TASMANIA

Dave Gray will discuss highlights of his work with the Historic Houses Trust (HHT) and include images of the various landscape projects in which he has been involved. For details contact Elizabeth Kerry on [liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au](mailto:liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au) or go to <http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/tasmania/>



## AUGUST 2013

**Thursday 8**

AGM and annual lecture

ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

The AGM and annual lecture will be held at the National Archives of Australia. 5.30–8pm.

**Sunday 11**

AGM and guest speaker

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Join us for the AGM and guest speaker, author, horticulturalist, and garden designer Meredith Kirton, followed by a visit to a local garden. Enquiries to Lyn Esdaile on (02) 4887 7122 or [garlynar@bigpond.com](mailto:garlynar@bigpond.com)

**Tuesday 20**

Key designers who shaped the Burnley Gardens

VICTORIA

The third in our winter lecture series: an illustrated talk by historian Don Garden looking at the landscape designers of Burnley Gardens from its inception to the present day, to follow the AGM. 6–8pm, Hall, Burnley Campus, 500 Yarra Boulevard, Richmond (Melway ref 45 A12). Cost: \$15 members, \$20 non-members, \$5 students. This is a joint event with the Friends of Burnley Gardens. Register online [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/) or contact Anne Vale on 0419 893 523 or [heriscapes@aussiebb.com.au](mailto:heriscapes@aussiebb.com.au)

**Saturday 24**

1988: Going native in the garden I

ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

The first in a two-part series on native plant gardens, explores the Australian National Botanic Gardens. A workshop on the history of the Gardens will be followed by a guided tour. 10am–12pm, Australian National Botanic Gardens.

**Saturday 25**

Lecture and workshop by Dr James Broadbent

TASMANIA

'Colonial Gardens: the History and Practical Conservation of 19th century Australian Gardens', conducted in two sessions, the first about the history of 19th century colonial gardens and the second, a practical session about the conservation of colonial gardens. It will be held at Runnymede, New Town, a significant venue as James has recently had input into the restoration of parts of the garden. For details see the Branch webpage <http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/tasmania/>



## SEPTEMBER 2013

**Saturday 14**

1988: Going native in the garden II

ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

The second in a two-part series on native plant gardens, explores neighbourhoods and native gardens. A visit to a local housing cooperative started in the 1970s with predominantly native plantings. Afternoon.

## OCTOBER 2013

**Friday 18–Sunday 21 October**

AGHS Annual National Conference, Armidale, NSW

The Australian Garden History Society's 34th Annual National Conference will be held in Armidale, 18–20 October 2013. Full details on the Society's website [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

## NOVEMBER 2013

**Thursday 21–Friday 22**

Spring garden tour, Ararat and Hamilton

VICTORIA

Save the date: 'Managing gardens with history—Spring tour of historic gardens' around Ararat and Hamilton including Eurambeen, Narrapumelap and Mooramong. Register online at [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/) closer to the date.

# Forum reports

Forums conducted by the West Australian and Victorian branches in May 2013 have focussed attention on conservation issues affecting culturally significant gardens.

## The Urban Forest: trees in our backyard and beyond

A very full day sprinkled with eighteen speakers, a full house of interested attendees, and spirited discussion. I understand proceedings of the forum are in train, so these are some personal impressions.

Opening addresses reminded us that the entire southwestern Australia and Perth has a globally significant richness of native plants that need better recognition and deserve conserving.

Then came sage advice about cultural landscapes and significant trees (European, as all Australia was an Aboriginal landscape) across southeastern Australia. This concluded 'that to understand Australian landscapes both natural and cultural one needs to understand trees'. Landscape conservation seems much more developed in the East, but if you consider the attempts to protect the Swan Valley, and the Darling Scarp view-scape as a backdrop to Perth, maybe the West is catching up.

## *Many public trees are not recorded and we can't protect what we don't measure*

One of three old Tuart trees (left) found in the City of Subiaco, remnants of the pre-European vegetation of Subiaco, and a young Tuart (right) recently planted nearby. A number of young Tuarts are now being planted in Subiaco's parks.

Photo: Bronwen Keighery

The changing phases of public tree planting which compensates for loss by clearing to establish towns and farms were illustrated. These ranged through: nostalgia (Britain forever), the tropical look (especially figs), the cult of the gum tree, palmification, and most recently to shrubs (such as Captain Cook bottlebrushes) rather than trees. These issues are Australia wide—particularly so in the southern states—and of special concern for a society attempting to retain a sense of history.

We learnt a lot about the economic values of trees providing environmental services in the city and how complex are the issues surrounding urban trees. The news only tells of the one tree that fell in a storm ignoring the thousands that didn't, providing shelter and soil stability. Some places in Britain are planning to plant trees closer to roads to slow traffic. As in many other major cities, a considerable percentage of Perth is taken up with roads and parking areas and these are a major contributor to urban heat. Roads should be designed to reduce heat, and retention of existing vegetation should be a significant determinant in assessing new projects.

We heard about honour avenues in the East and West. Approximately 27 such avenues were planted in Western Australia, but many have been lost and, unlike monuments, are poorly documented. There is even less documentation about honour groves or arboreta.

Tightening the focus on Perth, we learnt that 'Model Towns' started before the city was established. The garden city concept, with 9 acres of parks per 1,000 acres was codified in Britain by 1898 and it was Perth town clerk William Bold who brought the concept to Perth in the early twentieth century. Daglish was the first planned garden suburb (few are aware of this—I wasn't and I live next door!). In Western Australia the major driver for the Perth's urban development was the Stephenson-Hepburn report in 1955. This introduced Regional Open Space (reminders of cultural landscapes) and a 10% open space requirement.

A thought provoking discussion followed. Why is the city losing trees? Are trees too big, houses too large, blocks too small; or is the community out of love with trees? We have become inwardly focused on houses and cars, not public spaces, resulting in cleared subdivisions lacking contours and trees.

A series of local experts discussed issues with growing trees in city: pests; diseases—old and new; pruning causing wounds for disease; poor quality nursery stock; and the importance of roots having space to spread in the topsoil and feed the tree. This was illuminating rather than necessarily depressing and affirmed that knowledgeable arboriculturists are needed at all stages. Local case studies of a notable exotic (Norfolk Island pines) and native Tuart tree considered how significance is assessed. The changing face of street trees in inner city Subiaco showed that local government has been pro-active about trees.





A number of councils have developed 'significant tree registers' but lack the power to protect trees, beyond making it difficult to remove public trees.

What to do? Many public trees are not recorded and we can't protect what we don't measure. A pilot study using mobile phones to log the trees of Fremantle, based on the San Francisco urban forest project ([urbanforestmap.org](http://urbanforestmap.org)), may provide one solution. This would be an independent system that may answer many of the issues dogging lists of 'significant trees' that have only partially covered Perth. Such a resource could become a listing of what trees are grown in Perth, tagging these with significance criteria, and recommending suitable trees for the diverse areas of the city.

Final discussion concluded that the Australian Garden History Society in conjunction with interested parties (landscape architects, local government bodies, and the like) could support a program to log the urban trees of Perth and then address the many issues raised at the forum associated with retention, management, and renewal.

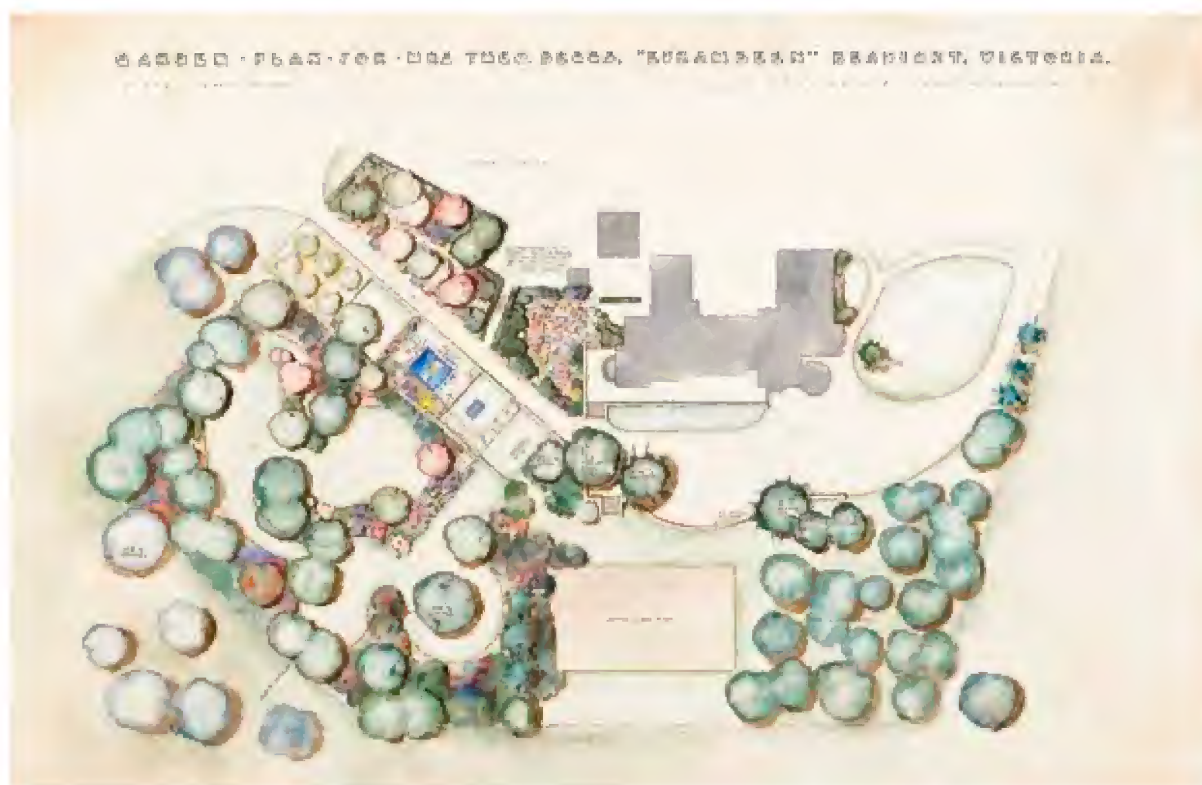
In all, a well organised and successful meeting bringing together many normally separate practitioners to share ideas and expertise on the complex issues of trees in a growing city. Special congratulations to Caroline Grant for all her hard work.

**Greg Keighery**

## The guiding eye: managing gardens with history

At the recent Victorian branch seminar in Melbourne, garden owners and garden history professionals (including heritage body representatives, heritage consultants, landscape designers, and horticulturists) put forward an array of views about how private and public gardens with history could be managed. Many interesting methodological issues were raised—dilemmas and ideas, as well as possible solutions for future directions. This overview is structured around themes outlined by the first speaker, Megan Backhouse, a journalist with Melbourne's *Age* newspaper and Master of Horticulture student (whose research has been assisted by support from the AGHS).

**How much creative expression?** The craft of garden management is complex and lends itself to varying degrees of innovation. The vision of Sarah Beaumont and Ian Glover to interpret the garden of their Eurambeen homestead through the eyes of the great garden designer Edna Walling and aided by an attached museum is compelling. Using a range of management and promotional skills they have created a website, set up a Friends of Eurambeen Trust, printed postcards and bookmarks, and provided accommodation for working bees.



Edna Walling's plan for the garden at Eurambeen, in Victoria's Pyrenees region (1937).

Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H 42827

